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WOMEN IN MODERN ADVENTURE

BY

MARJORIE HESSELL TILTMAN

AUTHOR OF
"GOD'S ADVENTURERS" "ENGLISH EARTH"
ETC.

WITH THIRTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS IN
HALF-TONE



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PREFACE

THIS book was written firstly because so many people asked for it. The many readers who have been thrilled by the stories of adventure by T. C. Bridges and H. Hessell Tiltman demanded more. Some of them, very sensibly, said, "What about the women? What about Freya Stark and Ella Maillart, the Swiss girl? And why not something about all the exciting scientific work that is being done in the field by such people as Evelyn Cheesman, the entomologist, or the young Scottish botanist Isobel Hutchison?"

The names that seemed to spring forth, quite suddenly, made a truly formidable list. Unfortunately explorers and people of that kind are extremely elusive, and it was much easier to make a list of them on paper than to get hold of them in person or even to reach them by letter. Miss Stark, for instance, had just set off into the Hadramut, the deserted southern portion of Arabia.[1] Ella Maillart was 'somewhere in China,' and that was all that her family seemed to know, although it is true that they gallantly came to the rescue afterwards with certain biographical details. Miss Hutchison was just off to Greenland. And so it continued.

However, one by one they were tracked down at last; one by one the stories of some of their adventures trickled forth in, for the most part, a very reluctant stream. For women who 'do' things, the writing of this book has made very evident, are painfully shy about it. "Why do you do this? How did it come about?" the author asked Miss Cheesman, who brought back a 'bag' of 40,000 insects from her last expedition in the South Seas. Miss Cheesman was obviously nonplussed for a moment. Then she answered, in a

[1] She was rescued thence by special aeroplane, owing to unlooked-for contact with an epidemic.

surprised sort of way, evidently never having considered the question, "Oh, well—because one *must*! It's just a case of being made that way, I suppose."

Few people, I believe, ever even look at prefaces, but I hope sincerely that this one will be read, for two reasons. The first is a piece of advice: have your atlas by you, and the chapters will prove far more interesting.

The second reason is that the preface is the only place in which I can make public acknowledgment to the many people who have helped me. Firstly comes Mr T. C. Bridges, whom long experience made a valued collaborator. Thanks in considerable measure are also due to all those travellers and explorers whose work is discussed in these pages and who afforded me such valuable assistance. I must mention, too, the writers and publishers of the many books referred to, with which the wise reader will wish to make closer acquaintance: *The Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt* (Harrap), by Winifred S. Blackman; *Islands near the Sun* (Witherby) and *Hunting Insects in the South Seas* (Philip Allan), by Evelyn Cheesman; *Up the Amazon and over the Andes* (Hodder and Stoughton), by Violet O. Cressy-Marcks; *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet* (Lane), *My Journey to Lhasa* (Heinemann), *Initiations and Initiates in Tibet* (Rider), and *The Superhuman Life of Gesar of Ling* (Rider), by Alexandra David-Neel; *Canyon, Cans, and Caravans* (S.P.C.K.), by F. H. E. Hasell; *On Greenland's Closed Shore* (Blackwood), *North to the Rime-ringed Sun* (Blackie), and *Arctic Nights' Entertainment* (Blackie), by Isobel Wylie Hutchison; *Turkestan Solo* (Putnam), by Ella K. Maillart; *Ten Thousand Miles in Two Continents* (Methuen), by Mrs Patrick Ness; *The Valleys of the Assassins* (Murray), by Freya Stark; *The Flaming Sword in Serbia and Elsewhere* (Hodder and Stoughton), by Mrs St Clair Stobart.

M. H. T.

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CHAPTER I

TRAVELLING IN THE PAST

The Story of Freya Stark's Wanderings in the Remoter Parts of Persia

IT is always worth while to go back to beginnings. They may provide sufficient surprises to encourage even the most dispirited. But there can be very few stories which start in so unusual a fashion as that of Freya Stark, whose travels and adventures in the wildest and most desolate parts of Persia (Iran), afterwards recorded by her in a book which seems likely to become one of the classics of this generation, *The Valleys of the Assassins*,[1] won for her the rare award of the medal named after Sir Richard Burton, the great nineteenth-century explorer in the Near East.

The story of Freya Stark is, in its early days, like that of many another girl. Her childhood began in a Dartmoor home, riding over the moors, running wild, as most children love to do. An idyll in its way, followed by one even more colourful—girlhood in Northern Italy, climbing in the Alps, holidaying with her father while he hunted chamois in the lesser-known valleys and gossiped to smuggler friends along the French border.

A severe illness after such a free and untrammelled existence might have crushed a spirit less resilient, for it meant no less than three years of almost complete physical inactivity—three years of, more or less, lying on a sofa. What can I do?—the most obvious cry. Knit! Sew! Read!—answers all well enough for an idle hour or two, but not stuff to get one's teeth into. Fortunately it happened that Freya Stark had an interest—strange for a girl,

[1] Murray.

but real—in Eastern history. In the same way that enthusiasts must read writings in the original tongue, so Freya Stark decided that to gain a real insight into the Eastern mind she must understand the language in which it spoke. So she studied classical Arabic for three years, and then, finding herself able to move about the world again, she thought that she would not only put what she had learned to the test, but add to it, for it had all proved great fun, and, as she quoted in an article she wrote, "in Trader Horn's excellent words, 'the stuff of real life can always beat the grammar-books for common sense.'"

And so, in the winter of 1927, she went out to Lebanon, and spent the spring of 1928 in Damascus. She declares that she was travelling "as a mere onlooker, provided with that only asset of ignorance—an open mind." But no human being of her calibre could remain so long in that seething, changing corner of the world—the corner which Lawrence of Arabia fought for, and over—and remain content with paying calls or admiring the scenery. Actually, Freya Stark was never given to paying calls, as "Government ladies" understand the term. Most of her dealings were with native Syrians, who had, incidentally, little of good to say about the French, who had a mandate to govern them. So little good that when chance presented her almost simultaneously with some vague talk about the ancient stone cities of Bashan, a friend to be entertained, a Druse guide, and three unemployed donkeys it seemed as if it were a positive call for her to see for herself things, or rather government, working out in practice.

A car would have attracted undesirable attention, two ladies by themselves in a train almost as much, but a homely little cavalcade of trotting donkeys was hardly worthy of notice by the police. In this fashion, therefore, they left the boundaries of the modern world behind them, and started off for the almost pathetically desolate, treeless lands.

Seventeen hundred years ago a flourishing Roman colony had peopled that region. They left behind them ruins of temples and villas and part of their unexampled arrangements for water-supply, the tanks of which still suffice to keep a measure of life going in those desolate villages. Bleak, burnt, and barren though they were, there was always, however, a welcome for the strangers. Their Druse guide would inquire for the most comfortable house, and there he would conduct his 'ladies,' for whom without question bed and board would be immediately forthcoming—mattresses and cushions on the floor, fresh coffee roasted, rice and *leban* and lamb prepared for them, while wild-looking neighbours would cluster round the open doors to stare and say, perhaps, "Welcome."

So the time passed, pleasantly varied, until dusk of the third day, when, halting, as was their custom, at an hospitable house, the police got wind of their presence, and a message was conveyed demanding their attendance before "the Mustashar." No one was more disconcerted than the six officers who received them, but, polite as they were, the hospitality they pressed upon the travellers was nevertheless forcible. How had their motor come into a country under martial law? It had not; they had ridden on donkeys. Donkeys! Then where had the ladies slept? The reply to that brought about a silence even more eloquent, and further questioning. "*Why* were the ladies travelling—on donkeys!—in Jebel Druse?"

As Freya Stark eventually discovered over and over again, it is essential to present a businesslike reason to officials who, confined by duty or necessity to most uncomfortable parts of the world, find it hard to conceive that anyone else can be there merely for the fun of it. It took much bland persuasion to convince the authorities before them that they were not dangerous spies. For three days they were kept under observation, and then, chiefly because no

one knew quite what else to do with them, they were allowed to depart and finish their holiday, wandering through the desert, living in black huts and tents of goat-wool, like the patriarchs themselves, and so imbibing in very truth "the stuff of real life," as Trader Horn put it—the first Europeans to travel there, so far as they knew and heard, since the French war.

The experience, however, proved sufficiently stimulating to bring the urge to travel farther afield—an urge which landed Freya Stark in Bagdad in the winter of 1929 with the determination to learn enough Persian to take her into parts of the country where the enchanted past was lived day by day, and the people had no comprehension, even knowledge, of what 'civilization' had brought to the world.

She would go thus into places in Persia where no European woman had ever been seen, into places where, if questioned, she could plead "the pursuit of wisdom" as a perfectly convincing answer, provided that the police did not enter into the argument, and even break laws as "a seeker after truth." The real reason why she travelled singlemindedly—for fun—she says, was never accepted as a sane excuse.

She wished first to make a journey into the Alamut Mountains, for a reason which really began in A.D. 1071 with a certain young Persian named Hasan-i-Sabbah, whom we moderns may know through two ways—firstly, as the origin of our word 'assassin,' and, secondly, as the proven forebear of the present Aga Khan, who is still receiving by law tithe due to him as head of the sect which his notorious ancestor founded.

No one interested in Near Eastern history, ancient or modern, could fail to be thrilled by the way in which Hasan had influenced its course and the marks he had planted on its pages. In her book Freya Stark recalls briefly his progress.

In A.D. 1071 Hasan joined a certain sect called the Isma'ili,

and introduced into their circles the new 'mode,' we may term it, of murder as a political weapon.

It proved itself most effective; it brought him tremendous power, as well as hate and execration, and the chronicles of the eleventh-century Crusades are full of him and the secret garden where he detained promising new young recruits, whom he had pressed, literally, into his service. All over the Near East were scattered the fortresses of the Assassins, among them the stronghold of Alamut, a great rock in an impregnable valley south of the Caspian Sea. This fortress Hasan chose for his own, and never left it till his death.

For about two hundred years after that date his followers continued to practise their founder's principles, until in 1256 the terrifying Mongol armies swarmed westward, laying waste with fire and sword. The garrison of Alamut might have survived even their attacks had not a powerful hostage seized by them, fearful for his life, commanded his own garrison to surrender, and the historic battlements were hewn down.

Yet, overwhelmed as it had been, the Rock of Alamut, it was reported, still bore traces of its amazing history. For a long time Freya Stark had cherished the longing to explore its fastnesses. Was such a project possible? She inquired of every available source, and gathered that the district at all events had been visited—perhaps eight or nine times—by Europeans. She hesitated no longer, but set out for the nearest village to the Alamut district, for on all the maps she could collect there was no 'Rock of Alamut' marked, not even a village—merely, in vague fashion, a district.

One fine May morning, therefore, she packed her bed and her saddle-bags and started from Hamadan, in the heart of Persia, for a place called Kazvin. Once there, she sent out the letters of introduction with which kind friends had

provided her. They conjured forth to her aid, not only addressees, but a host of people ready to discuss history and offer advice. For once, as Freya Stark said, she could provide a good reason for her presence: they knew about Hasan-i-Sabbah, and thought it quite natural that anyone should come all the way from England to see the remains of his castle.

Most helpful of all was a Persian doctor friend, who offered for guide one of his own men—a muleteer, Aziz, who had spent his whole life between the Caspian passes, and who would, as he assured Freya Stark, look after her "like her mother."

As, what was more necessary, he evidently knew his job he was engaged, together with two sub-muleteers, whom he demanded to do the donkey-work for him, by name Ismail and the Refuge of Allah. When the caravan started on the next morning it proved to include more unorthodox members—the mother of Aziz and his small sick son. But, as Miss Stark said, it was not her affair. She had agreed to pay two *tomans* (4*s*.) a day for all she required, including food, for as long as she wished, and, as it happened, the two extra provided diversion, particularly the old lady, who chattered volubly and leaped torrents as if she were seventeen and not seventy.

At first their way lay through cultivated valleys, rich with vines and apricots and mulberry-trees, and black oxen busy with ploughing. But it ended suddenly with barren valleys, which again gave place to a plain, and then rounded foothills at the foot of their first mountain-range, which they had to cross by a steep ravine leading towards a pass, dotted with sweet-scented Alpine flowers, and full of flocks of sheep and black goats and the black nomad tents of the shepherds.

On the topmost part of the ridge they reached a point from which they could look on the very valley of the

Assassins, and even on the Rock of Alamut itself, in a pale-green cleft, with red and black mountain-ranges round it.

The country in which they were was curiously uncharted and unmapped—also, for that matter, unnamed. Freya Stark found herself perforce with the occupation of a geographer as well as a traveller, and soon—so news flies between those obscure villages—got herself such a reputation that total strangers would come up to her and proffer information unasked.

One day they reached the very road which Hasan himself must have followed to his home. It led over a brick bridge, whose ruins still remain, disappearing behind a headland of rock which closed the valley like a wall. Roads in desolate districts are governed inexorably by wells of water, and may remain unchanged through centuries, while villages and strongholds round them may fall to decay.

To explore the Rock itself was the next step. After a certain amount of reconnoitring they reached a village named Qasir Khan, which was fairly near to it. Here they procured two modern Assassins, equipped with pickaxe and shovel, who would make steps up the steep slope for them and their mules. This served to take them up the lower inclines, after which point Miss Stark had to dismount and put on her climbing-shoes in order to reach what was once the lower part of the castle. Very little was left, however, of what had been an impregnable fortress. Patches of ancient wall clung to the sides of the rock, but for the most part the fortress had crumbled into stones and mortar, through which masses of wild tulips were springing.

At this stage the party dwindled to Miss Stark, Aziz, and Ismail. The plan was to follow the valley to the native village of Aziz, called Garmrud, and over the pass northward, through the Caspian jungle, to the sea. Much of the country *en route* was extremely unhealthy, very hot and damp, and malarious, so that many times Miss Stark was

compelled to halt and administer what quinine and castor-oil she could spare. She was glad to reach at last Garmrud, where the whole village received with the greatest friendliness their first European visitor for years.

The welcome of Aziz was not so warm. A short time back he had taken a new young wife, who was furious with him for remaining away from her for so long.

"What had he been doing?" she demanded, in a long harangue. "But, of course, when a friend said 'Stay!' his wife was forgotten!" However, Aziz had experienced the price of matrimony before, and continued to smile unperturbed.

On the top of one of the rock-pinnacles accessible from the village stood another castle—that of Nevisar Shah—described by Marco Polo centuries before. No Frank had ever climbed the 3000 feet to its ruins, so Miss Stark was told, and for that and for many other reasons she felt that it was worth a visit.

Like the stronghold of Alamut, however, little remained, except the beauty of the landscape, and among the masses of *débris* a quantity of broken thirteenth-century pottery, at which Miss Stark "blessed the destructiveness of Assassin housemaids long ago."

So unheard of was it to attempt to scale these fabled heights that when they returned to Garmrud they were treated like heroes. On the same evening, escaping from their attentions to enjoy a solitary walk, she met once again a chance acquaintance, who pestered her with information and proceeded to tell her of the castle in the hills, "up there, impossible to reach." The old man with whom she had been exchanging the time of day allowed the mere ghost of a smile to pass his lips. "She has been to the castle this morning!" he said gravely.

On the next day they climbed out of the country of the Assassins and found their way to the shores of the Caspian Sea.

But by August Freya Stark was back again in Kazvin, where the tales of a Persian friend fired her with the desire to find the old ruined castle of Lamiasar, which had been captured for the Assassins in A.D. 1083. He could not, however, give her more detailed directions than the fact that it was situated in a malarious piece of country of about 10,000 inhabitants. It would therefore entail a certain amount of exploration.

This time Aziz was unable to play 'mother' to her, but sent in his stead two of his mules and his servant Ismail, who was, it must be admitted, an extremely bad and stupid substitute for him. But no minor irritations could spoil the joy of travelling unfettered through a landscape of such charm and variations. There were, it must be admitted, awkward moments. One evening, during Ismail's absence in search of lodgings, she perceived three men leaping towards her with reaping-hooks. Remembering the advice of a Druse guide given to her in the past, she called out, while they were still at a distance, "Peace be upon you! Is the lodging-house a long way off?" In spite of this courageous attempt to establish friendly relations, she was really surprised when they belied their fierce appearance by the amiable reply of, "Upon you be peace!" More—once within conversing distance they informed her that the 'lodging-house' Ismail was searching for only gave tea by day to the donkey-men: they must take her to their own village.

Their own 'village' consisted of twenty houses, whose inhabitants thought Arabic to be the British language. But, as usual, no efforts were spared to make her feel at home and to find a bed for her on the roof of one of them. As usual, too, she was soon interrogated with questions from all sides on the reason for her journeyings.

"I am looking for a ruin called Lamiasar," she told them, with not even a faint hope that they had ever heard of it. But such was the kindness of Fate that at that very moment

an old man, passing by on a donkey, happened to catch the name.

"Lamiasar?" he repeated, and pointed ahead. "Why, it is there! You can get to it from here in one day!"

Unfortunately that one day bounded some of the most unhealthy country through which she had ever travelled, and Ismail added wrath and bad temper to his natural stupidity as they went on and on, without seemingly ever getting anywhere, although Freya Stark was able to see the ruins of the castle quite clearly through her field-glasses—the 'magic glasses,' as they were invariably called. There was nothing for it but to halt at the nearest village, consisting of half a dozen houses and one *Imamzadeh* (shrine), where the seats were made of century-old tombstones laid on mud ledges.

On the next morning they found an old man who offered to lead them to Lamiasar, so, leaving their luggage behind in care of the peasants, they followed him through the rice-fields and up a precipitous ravine which the mules could not manage. There was nothing for it but to scramble up the slope of rock on hands and knees, till at last they reached the former battlements of the castle.

It was a place to conjure up history, and Miss Stark spent some hours there, exploring the old water-ways and conduits and cisterns. But Ismail was not interested in such things, and he privately begged the old guide not to mention any more castles, even if he knew of them, in that mosquito-infested region. Much as Miss Stark resented his interference when she discovered it, it seemed as if he were justified on practical grounds, for that night, lying out in the field under her mosquito-net, she began to feel very ill, and surrendered meekly to his proposal that they should renounce all further ruins and ride eastward towards the hills and the lovely Throne of Solomon, the third highest summit of Persia.

But the departure was too late. By the time they came within sight of the first red pinnacles of the Alamut gorge Miss Stark felt too ill to continue, and they halted once more at the first whitewashed *Imamzadeh*, and had her bed put up immediately under a pear-tree near a brook.

So she lay, not expecting to recover, slipping from coma to coma, just sufficiently alive to take a little white of egg, sour milk, and boiled water. On the third day, as she was worse instead of better, she sent Ismail across the mountain-range on one of the mules to get a prescription from some doctor in Kazvin. Ismail returned, not only with a bottle of digitalis, but a letter from some unknown well-wisher who "hoped that she now realized the gravity of her situation, and would abandon this foolish idea of wandering unprotected over Persia." Had the unknown only been aware of it, his letter reached some one who had very nearly abandoned any idea of wandering altogether. But as her temperature dropped so Miss Stark's spirits rose, and by the time her mule had been equipped, a few days later, with a platform for carrying her over the mountain-range to a place where she could pick up a car to take her to a hospital in Tehran she was sufficiently recovered to be able to look at the mountains in the morning light. They appeared to her, she wrote, "as a vision ethereal and clean." Could she not trust herself to them? After all, she reasoned, literally, but a little illogically, all she had to do was to order Ismail to turn the mules round and start in the opposite direction. She did order him, and he obeyed—doubtless with emotions too mixed to be described here.

As they slowly wandered along she injected camphor to steady her heart. Occasionally they halted, while she fed herself on white of egg and brandy, the only foods she dared risk, until, after painfully slow going, they reached a village which she had visited before, and she decided to go no farther that night.

They all remembered her and welcomed her, and the local squire (who was the owner of the Rock of Alamut) and his wife placed their house at her disposal. She had her bed made up on the terrace, and for some time lay enjoying the murmur of the little brook below and the whisper of the poplar-leaves and the light of the moon, when suddenly a new and unpleasant crisis intervened—all the unpleasant symptoms of a bad attack of malaria.

It was obviously impossible to move on on the next morning, and she lay gloomily in bed, while various acquaintances came to inquire about her health. Who should turn up among them but Aziz, her guide, with the surprising news that there was a Persian doctor from the Caspian shore spending a summer holiday in a village only five hours away. Having been assured that the invalid would pay what he considered the exorbitant sum of ten shillings for riding ten hours during his holiday—for "was not health more than gold?" demanded Freya Stark, in the epigrammatic manner most calculated to impress the East —he sent off Ismail to fetch the doctor.

The doctor, who justified the amazing doses he prescribed by the remark, "We know more than your doctors do about these diseases!" settled down afterwards to shake his patient's confidence somewhat in his rules for health by indulging in the opium pipe. "I see that you disapprove," he excused himself. "I disapprove myself, but I do it all the same."

The next morning found the invalid lucid in mind, but so weak in body that she fainted twice on the saddle-bags of her donkey. The third time she was hoisted up, preparatory to enduring a five hours' ride, she managed to retain her consciousness, if not her confidence.

Three hours later they halted for rest. She was lifted down from her mule, given glasses of tea, injected with more camphor, and covered with a cloth to keep away the

flies. Thus stimulated, she was enabled to climb for another two hours, till they reached a shady village in the mountains. "Which house would you like?" asked Aziz; and, having selected a high cottage with two rooms on the roof, he went to turn out the inhabitants, who, as she related, "with the unquestioning hospitality of the East, cleared away most of their belongings in fifteen minutes, swept the floor with an inadequate brush of leaves, and settled in what looked like a henhouse below."

Meanwhile Aziz and Ismail busied themselves to make it an adequate apartment for a convalescent. The walls of the rooms were of mud and straw, the ceiling of poplar trunks, with a layer of thorns to support the mud roof. The floor was covered with reed matting, on which Aziz laid Mazanderani rugs of coloured felt. Garlands of dried roses hung over little niches in the wall. In the corner of this 'luxury' Miss Stark had her bed and mosquito-net erected, and in spite of her malaria managed to spend some days that to her were pleasant and to the villagers undoubtedly some of the most thrilling of their lives. She was almost sorry when the time came when she could once more walk. Aziz left her to go ahead to prepare a welcome for her in Garmrud, leaving Ismail to take charge of her and to follow him leisurely, calling at the inevitable castle on the way.

The castle proved a disappointment, but compensation awaited her in Garmrud in more topical directions. The whole village was agog with the festivities for three weddings, at which Miss Stark was given the place of the honoured guest. Amusing as were the performances—riding, dancing, and gymnastic feats by the village idiot—and difficult as it was to tear herself away from ceremonies that many people would have given their eyes to witness, Miss Stark was anxious to reach the Throne of Solomon. Aziz, though, was reluctant to accompany her, for he had, as has been told, recently taken to himself a new wife. But

Miss Stark was inexorable, and she had a strong ally in the first and discarded wife. "Keep him away a long time," said the latter lady in her ear as they said good-bye. "I do not want to see him back at that house across the river!"

Their journey began through a typical Caspian pass, with flowers and waterfalls and undulating pastures, with snow and semi-glaciers in the distance, where the only people were the shepherds. There, in a little pen, her bed was put up under the moon; there she slept soundly.

From stage to stage they travelled, looking for flowers, trying to take heights with an Abney spirit-level, making notes, and wandering through 'villages' of ten houses. At one of these villages, named Shahristan, the people rushed to see her as if she had been a rare exhibit, and implored her time and again to stand up on a roof and show herself at full length to new audiences.

In spite of such indications of the rarity of Western Europeans, however, she heard a rumour that a deceased emir had once brought a party of Englishmen up that very valley, and there was, at that very moment, in the next village a Hungarian engineer with a Greek wife. The engineer, it appeared, had been sent there by the present Shah of Persia to prepare to develop the region.

Now there were, near the Throne of Solomon, some warm springs, which legend said were produced by Solomon himself for the delight of his beloved Balkis, the Queen of Sheba. These Freya Stark wished very much to visit. She also desired to exchange greetings with the engineer's Greek wife, if only so as to speak for a change in any other language but Persian. So one morning at 7 A.M. she called on the lady, who, as it happened, was also going to the hot springs.

There were many other visitors to the baths—perhaps a dozen or so, friendly creatures, who thought nothing of travelling for two days' ride from their houses with nothing

but a bit of bread and cheese and a samovar for tea. But they were not to the taste of the Greek lady.

"What frightful people!" she announced, shooing them away with her parasol. "I would never have thought it possible to live in such a savage place. Every night I lie and weep. The houses are not safe; there is a hole in every roof, and there is not a path but, if you fall off it, you are dead."

For the whole time she was there she continued the tale of her woes, until at last, having rounded the corner of the valley on her way home, the despised visitors returned and settled down for a comfortable chat with Miss Stark.

Darkness fell early, accompanied by a thick white mist and a drizzling rain, reminiscent of Highland weather. Ismail had been exchanged for the Refuge of Allah, whose chief delight was to be serviceable. Together with Aziz, he proceeded to erect her tent, which had been reduced to one piece of canvas for the sake of lightness. It kept out the rain, but not the damp. But what matter? She was at last on her way to the great Throne of Solomon. What were a few minor discomforts compared with that?

On the next morning, however, the *shikari*, whom they had engaged for his optimism on the subject when safe in the village of Shahristan, began to hedge when Miss Stark spoke of scaling the summit. Before they started he had promised to bring them an ibex from the hills for "the kitchen," and now pounced upon this as a most convenient way of escaping from awkward questioning. Aziz had been rash enough to lend him Miss Stark's field-glasses to help him in his hunting, with the consequence that for one whole day they lost him. For a few hours they straggled on without his help, but at last it became evident that it was unwise. So they camped in a grassy corrie, until a move of some sort became imperative, and they climbed up until they came across a shepherd, who directed them on to the right track.

It was now long past sundown, and the air was sharp and

cold, but deliciously bracing. It was one of the moments that are worth travelling across the world for. The men had built up a large fire of thorn branches, Miss Stark had crawled into her sleeping-bag, when who should appear but the truant *shikari*, so full of excitement at the magic power of the field-glasses that repentance never even seemed to occur to him. Magic or not, he had no ibex, only three eggs, but Miss Stark forgave him for his hunter's tales, which he told as they sat round the fire under the moonlight, with the scent of hay in the air and the distant sound of water falling in their ears.

On the next morning they started early to climb the great wall of the mountain-range. The pass leading up through it was about 14,000 feet high, so that the men found exertion difficult, and Miss Stark herself, accustomed to altitudes, was overcome by a blackness before the eyes. She was still nothing more than an invalid from a medical point of view, and the men lifted her on to a mule whenever the gradient made it possible. But only here and there was it gradual enough, and for the most part they had to crawl along, fifty paces at a time, until at last they emerged upon the ridge which rose to the very peak of Solomon's Throne, and they were able to look at the world around them as if they were looking down at a printed map.

At this point the climb becomes neither a physical achievement nor a geographical attainment, but a story with a plot and a villain in it.

Far back in the village behind them the Hungarian engineer had bearded the *shikari* and threatened him with the wrath of the Government and the Shah himself if he led the foreign lady where no *Ferangi* had ever been before. Perhaps it was jealousy, perhaps some secret order. Whatever the reason, the *shikari* had led them to a point where they could do naught but gaze at an apparently inaccessible snow-covered peak. Not until the next morning did they

learn the truth through an abject confession which was wrung out of him by Miss Stark's unimaginable generosity in paying him for his time back to the village after dismissing him from her service—the truth that there was an easy mule-track thither by another route.

Sitting up there at the top of the pass, the next problem was how and where to descend. Aziz and the Refuge of Allah washed their hands of their eccentric employer and settled to sleep, while she struggled to reconcile her printed map with the panorama that lay spread out before her. Alas, it looked very much as if the Indian Survey had depended on hearsay for their efforts, so great a discrepancy obviously lay between their transcription and the real country. Of much of the landscape that lay before her—forests and hills and far mountain-ranges—the map utterly disclaimed any knowledge. And even though she managed to climb just one hundred feet higher she could see nothing of such features as exits or routes through the virgin forests, rendered even more impenetrable by a veil of mist.

Only one possibility appeared at all practicable—to imitate the custom of the country and descend from Alpine pasture to pasture, and then, after exploring the sources of the rivers descending from the mountains, drop over one of the passes on to the road to Tehran.

It was a difficult descent, too steep to do anything but scramble down as best they could on foot. The altitude not only made breathing a strain, but rendered the atmosphere intensely cold after sunset. On the first night they found a semicircle of loose stones—a shepherd's shelter—to protect them. On the next day, after some hours, they reached country where they could mount their mules once more—a great relief, for Miss Stark had been feeling ill from the great strain of the previous day, and to collapse three days' journey from any road for wheels would have precipitated an awkward crisis.

But she recovered, partly under the stimulus of the loveliness and richness of the country they now struck. They passed through little glens and green valleys and small hamlets. They had so much enjoyed camping out at night in those solitary hills that the idea of sleeping under a roof again was far from pleasant, and Miss Stark determined to resist all offers of hospitality from village folk. But scarcely had they begun their usual preparations for the night outside one village when a procession became visible, winding on and on like a long black caterpillar. Miss Stark watched them with misgiving; she knew only too well what it portended; and though "to eat, rest, write, read, or meditate with fifty or a hundred people watching . . . became almost habitual by the end of my journey, it never ceased to be a strain." The present cavalcade resolved itself into a series of curious circles, finally adorned by the Agha of the village, who proceeded promptly to seat himself on the carpet opposite Miss Stark.

"What papers have you to allow you to be here?" he demanded truculently.

There are many ways of dealing with a bully, but the Eastern method is probably the most disconcerting.

"My passport is in order; my servant will find it," answered Miss Stark in as languid a fashion as possible, adding, with a bow, "Happy has been your coming!"

"Your amiability is excessive," he replied, as etiquette demanded, and so the conversation continued, until Miss Stark's *répertoire* of polite phrases was exhausted, by which time the Refuge of Allah had produced the required document.

"Are we friends with the English?" the Agha asked of her at last, and on her satisfying him on the point she was compelled to surrender to the entertainment he pressed upon her.

As it happened, the Agha improved vastly on acquaintance, and the evening which she spent at the house of himself

and his brother, discussing the Koran and what would happen in the event of war between England and Persia, was even enjoyable.

"If we do fight every one of us is a Rustum," declared the Agha bombastically to Miss Stark's assertion that England would win. The brother settled the argument by laughing, and the conversation was turned into safer channels.

The village where she was staying—Rudbarek by name—was so delightful that the realization that she must resume her journey caused her real pangs. The main street was a narrow track beside a rippling river; all the houses were embowered in fruit trees; and the Kurdish women inhabitants all wore gaily coloured dresses as they sat spinning on the benches outside their houses.

But in Persia the sacrifice of one thing is often rewarded by the gift of another, and it was easy to forget the warm living present in the spell of the past that clung to the Mound of Kalar and the old city round it—the next stage of her travels.

Henceforth her way lay among villages, closely peopled, but offering their store of surprises and adventures—villages where they cut up a newly flayed sheep for supper under her nose, and put her to sleep, as a mark of honour, in the same room as the family. "It was a good room," related Freya Stark, "with niches all round in the usual fashion, but a touch of originality was added by a narrow channel filled with running water, built round the base of the wall for bugs to drop into and get drowned!"

After many more days, during which they once more climbed a pass and descended again, they at last struck country where roadmaking was in progress, and two thousand countrymen, hired from the surrounding villages at *6d.* a day, were engaged in levelling, chipping out, building up, and dynamiting.

By an unfortunate accident an iron instrument carried

by one of the labourers pricked Miss Stark's mule as they passed. The animal turned and galloped towards the river, which lay three hundred feet below. Miss Stark, riding on a pack-saddle, without rein or stirrup, was helpless. Had it not been for the prompt action of her servant she would undoubtedly have been killed. Fortunately he was walking ahead; he jerked at the mule's halter with all his might and pulled him up. Miss Stark slipped off and rescued her camera, which was caught at the very lip of the abyss.

"Thank God it is not broken!" she said, but the Refuge of Allah, feeling a suggestion of ingratitude in this remark, said reproachfully, "If you had got killed, what should we have said when we got to Tehran without you?"

However, they did reach Tehran, although separately. The Refuge went on foot with the mules, while Aziz and Miss Stark took to what she considers the miseries and discomforts of Persian cars, which finally brought them once more to "the refinements of life" and good-bye to the mountains and to each other.

But it was good-bye only for a time. There were many more journeys to follow, as entrancing as any hitherto experienced. Her next expedition, undertaken that same year, took her into Luristan, where she went hunting for hidden treasure. But of that and of many other travels and adventures you must read in her own book: there is no space here to retail even the bare bones of them, stripped of their colour, their humour, and their zest for living.

CHAPTER II

HUNTING BIG GAME IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The Equatorial Exploits of Mrs Kathleen Glover

THE little girl who grew up to be a big-game hunter and explorer, making journeys that lasted for years, instead of weeks and months, penetrating 1000 miles farther into the Sahara Desert than any other white woman has done before or since, must have been what is commonly called 'a trial' to her mother. In spite of her pink-and-white cheeks, very fair hair, and blue eyes, tokens generally held to promise the old-fashioned ideal of femininity, she much preferred seeking adventures with her brother to gentler pursuits. They lived in the country, and even when she was a mere child she was accustomed to go about with an air-gun or the sort of rifle with which country-folk shoot rabbits and rooks. When she grew up and went to London she found such tastes difficult to follow. But she tracked down a gunsmith in the Haymarket—a shopping region much favoured by sportsmen—who had a rifle-range behind his premises, and there she used to go and aim at bull's-eyes to her heart's content. Unfamiliar and strange client as she must have been, the gunsmith soon discovered her mettle.

"Do you know," he told her one day, "that you're a natural shot? And that not one person in a thousand is that?"

A talent for hitting a bull's-eye nine times out of ten, however laudable it must appear to a gunsmith, is an awkward gift to put to any practical purpose in England. But destiny played its part here in the most proper fashion: the

girl married a man who was not only the son of a traveller, but an incorrigible wanderer himself. And so these two most unconventional people were able not only to live together, but to work together.

The first time that Mrs Glover—as the child Kathleen became—had a real opportunity of demonstrating her excellent marksmanship was in Kenya, that much-written-of district in East Africa. She had gone out on a holiday with friends, and while there went on her first big-game expedition, for the district is rich in wild animals—lions, rhinoceros, oryx, gerenuk, haartebeest, Thompson's gazelle, and eland. Big-game hunting in Kenya is definitely a 'sport,' however, and a very different thing from the more serious form of it which she and her husband undertook on her next journey.

The objects behind this next journey were many. Firstly, perhaps, the Glovers had a longing to explore that forbidden territory in the African desert which lies south of Libya and within the zone of French military territory. On the map you may find it marked as Tibesti, or Thibesti. Few white men have ever penetrated its sandy, desolate, barren wastes; no white woman, except Mrs Glover herself. A range of mountains bounds its north-east frontier; there were human beings actually living somewhere in their unknown fastnesses, though savage and violently hostile to white invaders. On its opposite boundary lies one of the most difficult stretches in the terrible Sahara Desert, cutting it off from Nigeria and the Cameroons.

Strange tales were told of this piece of country. To archæologists the Sahara has always offered many fascinating problems for solution. A French novelist has written a romance based on the theory sometimes propounded that it is the site of the lost continent of Atlantis. The natives living near a valley in the south by Lake Chad believe in a legend which relates that when the earth was covered by a

flood the Ark came to rest on the peaks of that valley. Surmise is interesting; what is more valuable is the fact that at one point in their journey from Lake Chad to Tibesti the country changed its character, and Mrs Glover and her husband came upon strange remains, bearing witness to some past generation of men who must have lived in that now forsaken wilderness. Out of the flat desert great slabs of rock thrust themselves, worn and hollowed by time into strange shapes. Near them rose great masses of stone carved who knows how long ago into giant-size representations of human faces, animals, and reptiles. And where the land rose into hills, sometimes ending in perpendicular cliffs, they found caves hewn out of the rock, on the walls of which were drawings of men and beasts, skilfully executed in colour.

Amazing as were such aspects of the country, it was not the desire to find an explanation for them that drew the Glovers towards Tibesti. Their primary purpose was the collection of rare animals for the British Museum, work which entails far more than skilful hunting. In the course of their operations they would have to make a geographical survey of the country where possible. Photographic records would be valuable. Mr Glover was commissioned to search for new gum-arabic belts. These were some of the objects behind the Tibesti journey, each one of sufficient importance in itself to warrant an expedition.

The Glovers actually reached Tibesti, although it took so long that they were reported dead. Nothing was heard of them for eight months; it was announced that they had been killed by robbers or raiders, and a French camel corps was sent out by the authorities into French Equatorial Africa to try to find their remains. Unable to trace any sign of them, the search-party returned to Mao, in Kanem, in the belief that there was no hope. As it happened, more or less about that time Mr Glover was writing a report to send

to a newspaper in England—the thrilling narrative of their escape from a band of desert robbers.

But this is anticipating the story. We must begin at the beginning, even though there is so much of it and so many adventures that a large part must be omitted.

Briefly, the expedition to Tibesti set out in 1928. At first it consisted of four white people—Mr and Mrs Glover and two others, but the latter two dropped out after four months, owing to bouts of fever and general indisposition. Lagos, on the west coast, was their starting-point. It is a swampy, fever-ridden port, but there is excellent hunting to be had in the vicinity, of which the Glovers took full advantage. From Lagos they worked all round Nigeria, spending many months trailing wild life, and between Lagos and Maidugari, in the Bornu province, obtaining a collection of no fewer than five hundred birds and mammals.

During these preliminary months they had sufficient adventures to fill a whole book. For example, they were the first people to get through to Benin by car. Benin's terrible second name is the City of Blood. Before the British rule two thousand people a year were sacrificed there, and their bodies thrown into a pit. Those days have been banished, but many relics of them are still to be met with, not only in the shape of mementoes of grim import, but in the stringent laws controlling the native population.

The Glovers halted for a while in the city, for they had permission from the Colonial Office to make a film of the Ogba, one of the great paramount chiefs of Nigeria, and doubtless a very terrifying personage in the bad old days. Even now he makes a most impressive spectacle in his robe of coral weighing 400 lb., his coral and ivory headdress and necklace, and his ivory bangles, carved with pictures of juju rites, each weighing 20 lb. Underneath the coral robe, so the natives declared to Mrs Glover, the Ogba carried three

skulls suspended round his waist, doubtless symbols of the old devil-worship. The truth of this report Mrs Glover thought it more prudent not to investigate, and she and Mr Glover contented themselves with filming the Ogba, his native guards and attendants, and the ancient sacrificial altar of stone in the courtyard of his dwelling-place, an altar still stained with the blood of the victims and still adorned with the ancient masks of ivory and ebony and brass.

From Benin they proceeded to the Aginibodi Swamps—never before penetrated by a white woman—and thence to Kano, where the Emir had some interesting things to say to them about the deterioration of morals among his people that has followed the coming of the white man. Stealing was absolutely unknown in the old days; everybody considered he had sufficient to live on, and no one thought it worth while to run the risk of incurring the penalty of having his hand cut off!

To follow their movements at this period in chronological order would be impossible in a limited space. Some of the strange peoples they met must be mentioned, however. There were the Kurdan-dan tribe, who dance for days at a time, and the members of whom can throw a hoe weighing 40 lb. with ease; the Kabalay tribe, whose women are amazingly good wrestlers in the Græco-Roman style, settling their superiority in annual contests, in which, on the occasion on which the Glovers were present, there were a hundred throws before the final six-hour bout in which the winner was proclaimed. There were amazing displays of horsemanship in the Bornu province by natives in full panoply, who are supposed to be among the finest desert riders in the world.

Mr and Mrs Glover are the only people ever to have succeeded in bringing back to England complete skeletons of a bull elephant, a mother elephant, and her fœtus. This

is a feat infinitely more impressive than the sentence suggests to the ignorant, who may be acquainted with the beasts only through the kind introduction of zoos or museums. The shooting of the animals is only one part of the job; there is the removal of the meat from the bones, the proper labelling of each bone, and the packing and the transport of them in regions where such a thing as a railway may never have been heard of. All this demands endurance, patience, determination, powers of organization, and an ability to handle natives whom the presence of eatable meat temporarily turns into a band of raving lunatics.

To all this the search for the herd, the hours and hours of trek that may be called for before it is even sighted, the picking of the specimen, and the trailing and the 'dropping' of him are only the preface.

It is not, of course, a preface without complications. There is always a thrill in elephant-hunting; there is almost always danger. On one occasion, when Mrs Glover was after an albino bull, a particularly rare species in Africa, she nearly lost her life.

The herd was moving along in Indian file about a mile out in the shallow waters of Lake Chad, which is by the north-east tip of Nigeria. As it was impossible to approach them without being seen Mrs Glover instructed the guide to disturb them, so that they moved in her direction. After crawling into the best position she could take she anxiously waited for the great bull to get within seventy-five feet of her. Suddenly he started to shake his head furiously and scream, thus making a telling head-shot impossible. So Mrs Glover decided that she must try for a heart-shot, to accomplish which successfully she would have to expose herself. Boldly she stood up. The instant she did so he charged. In the slimy mud it was impossible for her to move. When he was almost upon her she dropped on one knee and fired—but too late! A terrific force seemed to

catch her and throw her through the air, where, it is somewhat amusing to note, she fired again, automatically. She knew nothing more until she was picked up by her boys from where she was lying unconscious in the mud. The elephant was about twelve feet away—dead. Her first shot had penetrated the brain.

"It is these unexpected moments that add zest to the sport of big-game hunting," added Mrs Glover to me!

The hunter who is killing merely for sport will have the tusks chopped out and the tail cut off, leaving the carcass for the natives, who look on it as their rightful perquisite, and go almost crazy with the excitement of the orgy in store. The news of the kill spreads far and wide in the most mysterious way. No tom-toms are heard, no smoke-fires are burned, yet almost before the noise of the shot has died away natives—from two-year-old 'piccans' to great-grandfathers—arrive from villages as far distant as two miles, carrying every conceivable household receptacle.

The difficulty of safe preservation and collection of every single bone of a carcass in such circumstances can now be well gauged. Yet the Glovers had received a special request from the British Museum to send back complete skeletons, and when Mr Glover 'dropped' an eleven-feet-two bull elephant in Ruma Bush, in Northern Nigeria, he and his wife decided that it was exactly the sort of specimen that the Museum wanted.

They therefore gave orders to the natives who rushed upon the scene that, although they might have the meat, the cutting of it was to be done slowly and carefully, and every single bone handed over. Now such dissection takes at least four days, no pleasant thing to supervise under a tropical sun in the most favourable conditions.

For two days the Glovers were just able to hold the sullen, puzzled natives in check, although time and time again various rebellious members had to be fought off the

decaying, odorous mass of flesh. At last it became more than native nature could stand. A concerted rush was made, which carried the two whites along in it, and during which hundreds of natives endeavoured to make off with any loose piece of carcass they could find, bones or no bones. For a quarter of an hour the whites, standing in a disgusting mess of offal and blood, struggled to guard their precious kill. Comparative peace was imposed at last; the bones were reassembled, counted, and luckily discovered to be still complete in number. The lengthy process of cutting at last came to an end; the bones were scraped, measured, labelled, washed in arsenic, put in bundles, and then placed in grass panniers, preparatory to being sent off. To carry the load hundreds of men were required, sixteen to the skull alone, which had to have a platform built for it from young saplings.

Before they trekked off to the railhead with it, however, the natives, who can be the most persistent of creatures, determined to have satisfied the question which had been puzzling them from the very beginning: what was to happen to the bones? In order to solve this mystery they sent a deputation to inquire if Mr and Mrs Glover would be so kind as to tell them.

This placed the Glovers in a difficult position. Try as they might, they could not make the natives understand the significance of 'museum,' for when they said the bones were to go in a big house they laughed politely, but sceptically.

At last a friendly District Officer came to the rescue with a brilliant idea, which would answer the natives' question and convince them at the same time of the importance of the work they were doing. "The King of England," he declared, "wanted the bones." This satisfied the curiosity of the majority, but one old chief visited Mrs Glover in her tent and asked her confidentially to tell His Highness, from

one king to another, that "the bones be bad chop. The meat be best past all."

In a land where transport conditions are so difficult and uncertain the risk of loss of months of work is always present. On certain occasions Mr Glover has had to go hundreds of miles in order to see the crates safely loaded on to rail or boat, leaving his wife alone in the bush or jungle, except for their native servants, and in charge of all the stores and funds. Not a situation in which to place a man or woman afflicted with 'nerves,' but needless to say there is no place for such on big-game expeditions, and Mrs Glover used to sleep well at night.

One night, however, she could not sleep. She heard footsteps prowling round the walls of the camp. She got up, and went out with her revolver to search for the marauders, and saw in the darkness two men, whom she ordered to go away. "Two bad men," her cook-boy, Sam, told her in the morning; "after moneys." On the next night the performance was repeated all over again. On the third night the men came again, emboldened by the absence of a white man. This time Mrs Glover was forced to shoot, and shoot she did, wounding one of them in the shoulder. A strange sequel for those who are interested in African native beliefs was offered on the following morning by a wound in the shoulder of one of two dogs which had been hanging round the camp kitchen. "Dogs them bad men," declared Sam, and stuck by his statement.

All these excitements were but preliminaries to the main object of the expedition—the penetration of the Tibesti region. As yet they had not even asked permission of the French authorities to make the attempt. The moment now seemed ripe, however, for going to Fort Lamy, the seat of government controlling the French military territory lying north of Lake Chad, to put their request forward, and so they sold their old Crossley car and bought oxen, which

would enable them to make the trek over the difficult country between Maidugari, where they happened to be, and Fort Lamy, which lies at the junction of the great rivers Logone and Shari. Transport by oxen is excessively slow, however, and by the time they reached Fort Lamy the heavy tropical rains had set in, inundating the whole surrounding country.

Now one of the passages in their route to the Tibesti Mountains had to be the crossing of Lake Chad, the explorers had determined. Lake Chad is an amazing inland sea, about six days' journey across, bordered by vast tracts of swamp, very shallow, but swept by terrible tropical storms. One of the features of the lake is the floating islands, covered by vegetation, which have been detached from the shore by the violence of the waves or currents. It is emphatically not a journey to be undertaken in the rainy season, as the people they consulted pointed out. While their advisers were fussing about the hazards they would be sure to encounter the Glovers mentioned to a French minor official in their most casual manner their wish to explore Tibesti. Whether he misunderstood them, or was ignorant of what such a journey entailed, is uncertain to this day, for on the strength of his somewhat vague verbal assent they rushed away before the matter could be reconsidered by those who knew better.

Their first course was to drift down the Shari river towards Lake Chad. Great crocodiles moved along with the boat; small black urchins, mounted on inflated goat-skins or plugged calabash, dared the crocodiles in order to stare at the strange party at close quarters; native boats made out of buoyant reeds sailed past them, the crew calf-deep in the swirling water, for the decks were always completely submerged. Inquisitive hippopotami came puffing and blowing out of the water, scaring the canoe-boys to death, as they plunged underneath the keel of the frail craft.

At night-time, when the little party pitched its camp on the shore, the same animals boldly ventured near in search of food. In the early morning the wild pig, leopard, lion, and waterbuck came down from inland to drink, causing the thousands of monkeys in the trees to send up a wild din and chatter. Black and white 'fish' eagles, brilliant blue king-fishers—birds of a hundred varieties—flew over the lake, a never-ending source of interest to the white people.

At last the Glovers and their canoe were in the open water, so far from land that no trace of vegetation was to be seen on the farthest horizon, and all the animals seemed to have disappeared. An infinite silence lay all round them.

But the tropics are nothing if not surprising. Suddenly the bright sun was blotted out by a dense cloud, the sparkling blue water turned to black, a hurricane wind whistled over the water towards them, whipping the waves to fury and whisking overboard as it passed blankets, pans, hats, matting, even a native boy. As he bobbed up in the whirling water one of his fellows stretched out a hand and grabbed him back just before the pelting rain descended. By now the water was pouring over the gunwales of the boat, flooding her and upsetting her equilibrium until it seemed as if at every moment she must heel over. The crew were staggering about helpless in the pitch-darkness, only visible to one another when the lightning flashed wickedly over the scene. Suddenly, with a shudder that threw them all flat, the boat came into collision with some unseen object, which held her fast at a dangerous angle. Cases of provisions, everything that could possibly be spared, was thrown overboard in the hope of getting her free. But she stuck fast stubbornly, while they plunged their frozen hands wildly into the water to try to discover what had her in its grip. Their hands met grass: they had struck a floating island, and there was nothing to be done but to wait,

shivering in the deluge, until the storm clouds were dispersed and they could see to dislodge her.

It took them five more days to reach Bol, on the other side of the lake. The boat had struck a bad leak, and continuous bailing was necessary. At last they arrived, and, with as little loss of time as possible, procured some camels, which would take them to Zegai, the fort in the desert where they were to make the final preparation for the long desert crossing to Tibesti.

Mrs Glover had much to tell me about camels, which unfortunately there is no space here to retail. Perhaps one sentence may suffice for a brief understanding: "The Arabs have ninety-nine names for a camel. We thought of a hundredth!" However, at Zegai the requisite number of beasts was at last rounded up, although the Glovers were forced to be content with young ones, raw and unbroken. It was even more difficult to find any native who would face the desert crossing: its many possibilities of death from sun or thirst or raiders were known only too well.

At last, by dint of heavy bribes and a certain amount of forceful persuasion, a contingent was got together. Sixteen days' journey through unbroken desert stretched before them—days that might mean twenty hours in the saddle and four days between each water-hole.

Imagine pushing off into that wilderness of desolation, leaving behind the last traces of life for a limitless expanse of sand! The swaying camels plodded over it at the rate of two miles an hour. To get down from their pitching saddles was impossible: the heat was such that the sand burned right through the stoutest leather soles and blistered the feet. Only at night could the little party descend to snatch an hour or two of sleep or to move their aching limbs.

The Arab boys had never even seen a woman on a camel before, trotting and riding like a man, and Mrs Glover's

powers of endurance soon won their respect, and gained for her the epithet of "Madam Courier"!

The first lap of the desert crossing lasted four days. Then, like a brown smudge against the blue sky, they saw in the distance the trees of the first water-hole—Duse Donga. At the scent of the oasis the tired camels raised their heads and lowed, quickening their pace.

There were only a few wind-bent palms when they reached the oasis, but the blazing sun had been so pitiless that even the thin shade they cast was welcome, and the little party sprawled in it thankfully, too tired to sleep, too hungry to eat!

But there can be no dallying in the desert. The camels were watered and fed from the fodder-loads, in the endeavour to infuse some energy into them for the next four days' march, and the expedition hastened on.

Every hour made the journey more painful and the physical conditions harder to bear. Hot, dry winds were blowing continually, filling the eyes, nose, and mouth with the sand they brought up with them, and inflaming the skin, almost blinding the party. The two white people sat bathed in a steaming perspiration, swaying about on the backs of the camels in a semi-conscious condition.

When they reached the second water-hole the caravan received a terrible shock. Sandstorms had filled it in, and before they could reach a drop of liquid they had to dig with shovel and pick for hours. When at last they got down to where a reluctant trickle was seeping out of the greedy sand it proved to be black and salty!

Between this water-point and the next a crisis occurred which nearly cost them their lives. One of the camels went mad with thirst, creating a general stampede. By the time the Glovers had been able to shoot him and put him out of his agony the water-bags had come off in the general *mêlée*, and all but two had spilled their precious contents over the

sand. At this sight the natives also went mad, making a rush for what remained of the liquid, and being held off only at the point of the revolver.

Even the camels fell in their tracks as they plodded over this stage, but, relieved of the burdens they were carrying, rose to their feet and made pitiable efforts to keep up with the caravan. The strongest of them were almost exhausted, so that a halt in the almost insufferable midday heat was imperative, to give them a chance to recover.

Twelve days after leaving Zegai they came upon the first sign of human habitation—a small mud fort, a few yards square, where the French camel-corps troops that patrol the well-points after raiders had once been housed. But one suicide after another among the Maharisti officers had compelled the French Government to abandon this eerie post, and when the Glovers arrived there it was guarded by a few birds only, which collapsed and died even as they drank the water from the washing-bowls, to be added to the hundreds of small mummified corpses of their fellows strewn round the well.

Once more they set out, this time on the last stage of the desert crossing. By now the feet of the camels were so blistered and cut by the hot sand and rough going that they could hardly drag themselves along. Some had to be abandoned, but as soon as relieved of their loads they limped after the caravan, lowing pitifully.

At last they sighted the French fort of Faya, the last outpost of French might, its black stark guns turned on the barren wastes. There the explorers had a meal of fresh dates, sour bread, eggs, and clean, cool water—"as welcome as a Ritz lunch to a beggar," declared Mrs Glover.

At Faya they had to make their final plans for the journey up the Tibesti Range. They had already found a guide who would suffice for part of the journey; the only other man who knew the region was a condemned murderer, in prison

for his crimes. As there seemed no other means of helping them the commander acceded to the request of the Glovers and let him out on parole—a somewhat risky cicerone, one would imagine, but actually one who proved himself the saviour of their lives.

Two days after leaving Faya they came upon the rock dwellings previously described. It was while they were camping in one of the caves that they were accosted by a strange native. The only definite answer they could obtain in reply to their questions was a request that he be allowed to work for them. As he had a camel, and they had been compelled to leave Faya incompletely equipped, they assented, though somewhat doubtfully.

One morning, however, when they were two full days from water, he disclosed the treachery of his motives. Unless he and the first guide—whom he had persuaded to join the conspiracy—were handed the funds of the expedition they would refuse to lead the caravan to the water, he declared. The only solution was action, both direct and quick. Covering their own guide with a rifle, they relieved him of waterskin, food, camel, and gun, and gave him five minutes to decide whether he would behave decently or be turned off thus into the desert. He surrendered almost immediately, and as for the interloper, he vanished during the first hour they stopped for sleep, together with his camel and stores, to join the raiders, whose spy their other guide—the convict on parole—declared him to be.

This convict-guide proposed to ride out with guide No. 1 in order to chase the spy and capture him before he could connect up with the raiders and give them valuable information about the whereabouts and strategical position and force of the little party.

The suspicions were justified in a very short time. The sun had just gone down when pickets reported movements of strange men and camels in a near-by ravine. No

sooner was darkness upon them than a shot echoed at their rear. The raid had begun!

There was no sign of the two guides. Their fellow-natives had dived beneath the camel-saddles at the first sign of shooting, and remained there, cowering and saying prayers, while Mr and Mrs Glover kept up a constant fire into a blank wall of darkness, trusting to luck that their shooting might keep the raiders from making a concerted rush at them. If that had happened there would have been good reason for the time-honoured warning which Mr Glover felt he had to give to his wife—"Don't let them take you alive!"

It seemed a whole lifetime before the first streak of light told of the dawn and they glimpsed camels rising from the rocks and slinking away into the hills. At ten o'clock the two missing guides returned with the equipment belonging to the mysterious spy, who had thrown it from him in his efforts to lighten his camel when they had drawn too close. One thing seemed obvious: had the spy not been followed immediately, but been given the opportunity to rejoin the raiding party, the attack would have been carried out with much more skill and force, and the lives of the Glovers would not have been worth a moment's purchase if they had been driven into one of the natural canyons of rock and ambuscaded from there.

It was through these great natural gateways of rock that they entered the foothills of the Tibesti Massif and gained the foot of Emi Kussi, the highest point in the range (11,000 feet) above them.

The plains at the base of Emi Kussi were covered with lava, with many boulders—painful stuff for the padded feet of the camels, making the march very slow. Three days of strenuous climbing brought them to the outer edge of the mouth of the crater, where they found a strange little community living in tiny houses partly made out of the natural

rock and warmed by the heat from within—very necessary warmth, it may be added, for the cold was so intense as to cause Mrs Glover frostbite and agony to the native boys.

After five days' exploration among the hills the party made the descent—a very difficult one over the surface of loose stones. On their way they passed the beautiful lake of Ouinga Kabir, whose turquoise-blue waters gleamed like a jewel in that waterless desert, fed from a subterranean flow and rising and falling strangely.

Near the lake they met a French non-commissioned officer, who had lived with a handful of black troops in that remote outpost for two years, a lonely existence which had turned him into a nervous wreck. He seemed to spend his life brushing his civilian clothes in anticipation of a long-deferred leave and waiting for the caravans from Kufra that never came.

Thenceforward the journey was easier. The camels rested, they pushed on over the long road to Achi and Beskeree, a place where man is so unknown that the leopards and cheetahs visited the camp nightly, regarding the explorers with curiosity and without fear.

Three weeks later they reached Mousserou, and for the first time learned that they were supposed to have been killed in the skirmish with the raiders, and that the desert had been searched for their remains. They had allowed a limit of four months for the Tibesti expedition; they had been away from civilization for eight months.

One of the most awkward consequences of this delay was the effect it had had, indirectly, on their health. They had taken the usual stores of bully-beef, sardines, and salmon in tins with them; these, of course, had given out before they were half-way through, and for the remaining four months they had been forced to live entirely on native meal and meat they shot. Mrs Glover is well accustomed to strange foods: she has had at times to be content with crocodile,

hippopotamus' tongue, and elephant's foot. But an occasional bout of such delicacies is a very different thing from an unvarying monotonous diet of them, and by the time she and Mr Glover reached Mousserou they were in a very bad condition indeed.

When the commander there heard their story he undoubtedly supposed that the explorers would have had more than enough, but, on the contrary, they returned to Lake Chad with the firm intention of once more resuming their business! And so they abandoned their camels at Dikoa, in Northern Nigeria, and went with porters to Central Equatorial Africa to hunt gorilla and elephant. Before they left there for Duala, on the coast, homeward bound, three years had passed since they had disembarked at Lagos for "the Tibesti show."

No woman could be more pleased and excited than Mrs Glover by the feminine luxuries which she is able to obtain once she gets back to civilization. But the thrill of shops and such people as dressmakers and hairdressers soon wears off, and before she has been long at home the ache for the wild places of the world seizes her, and she and her husband put their heads together to discover what more there is that they can do.

They had not been back in England many months before it resolved itself into a motor expedition which would cross Africa from west to east, from Cape Verde, in the Senegal, to Ras Hafun, in Italian Somaliland.

Actually this journey had been attempted before, but had never been accomplished, and when the Glovers were working out possibilities they were warned by the Governments concerned that the obstacles would be almost insuperable, particularly if they intended to try the crossing in cars not equipped with track-wheels. An adequate supply of petrol was another great problem, of course. Although the Shell company promised the explorers their

utmost co-operation, they could not guarantee stations, or even dumps, across 15,500 miles of territory, some of it absolutely unknown.

However, the Glovers continued to maintain that it should be possible to cross Africa from west to east by car. Where there was no route they would make one! They had a unique knowledge of the continent, and such surveying as they could do over unknown country would be most valuable.

Needless to say, special cars would be necessary for such work, and the first thing the Glovers did was to consult experts about these. Three cars were finally built—International Six-speed Specials, designed to carry 400 gallons of petrol, in twelve-gallon and forty-gallon tanks, and with detachable bodies, so that the latter might be taken apart from the engines and used as bridges and pontoons.

The cars were sent to Cape Verde in colossal packing-cases, and there the job of assembling the parts was tackled, a difficult proposition for skilled mechanics, but one that seems almost impossible when only untrained natives are employed.

At last they were ready, and the little party pushed off on its journey. The date was March 31, 1931. No one quite knew when they would finish, but it is certain that no one suspected that two and a half years would pass before the conclusion of the expedition. Two one-ton dumps of food had been placed ahead of them for emergencies, one at Kano, in Nigeria, and the other at Nairobi, in East Africa. Before the crossing was over they could have done with twenty dumps!

Actually the worst trial was the lack of drinking-water. At one point of the crossing the natives, mad with thirst, drank all the water-supply in a night. Mrs Glover herself was so weak that she drank from the car radiators water that already had been used for washing purposes, with the

consequence that she was ill for hours afterwards. To replenish their supply they had to send one of the party a seventeen hours' journey to the nearest post with an urgent message asking for water.

At first the crossing was fairly straightforward. They made an easy run up the coast road as far as St Louis. At that point, however, the road gradually changed into soft sand, to negotiate which they had to change down into second low, auxiliary gear. As they crawled along thus they passed car after car that was either bogged or entirely burned out.

After Timbuktu the road completely disappeared, not even a bush-track or old trees marked with red paint remaining to denote the way. Their route led over sand-dunes, sometimes covered with a soft carpet of powder two feet deep. To traverse these dunes decidedly queer methods had to be employed over and over again before they were successful, even if it meant, as it once did, trying the same thing nineteen times!

This was the stretch of country [redacted]re water was most difficult to obtain, but, as is a frequent occurrence in Africa, they passed from one extreme to another, and at Gao they got too much. There they struck the rains, which turned the muddy stretches into sheer morass, which rendered the chains to the cars completely useless. The only way of extricating themselves was to run the engine at maximum speed, and then, with the aid of other mechanical manipulation, to try to jerk out the car.

At Sokoto, in the north-west corner of Nigeria, it became necessary to cross three-quarters of a mile of swamp water. Here the value of the detachable bodies became evident. The lorries were taken apart, and the sides of them were lashed together with ropes and chains and made into a platform, which somehow or other was hoisted on to three native dugouts, also lashed together. To manœuvre that

three-quarters of a mile took four days, and the natives became so excited as it appeared that their efforts were going to be crowned with success that they pushed one vehicle off the pontoon into the swampy water. The efforts necessary to hoist it back can be imagined, for it was completely submerged.

Once out of the swamp they found a road to Kano, even though it was a bad road. Between Kano and Fort Lamy the rivers had been swollen to such an extent by the rains that they had to build bridges on no fewer than five occasions before they could cross.

"What! You here again!" exclaimed some of the officials at Fort Lamy in amazement, as the explorers bobbed up once more. In such parts of Africa one does not often have the same visitors twice.

From Fort Lamy they found what Mrs Glover calls "a reasonable road," going right through Central Equatorial Africa. It was excellent in the Belgian Congo, passable in East Africa, and best of all in Italian Somaliland, for there they found it equipped with petrol-pumps every hundred miles or so, no doubt for Italian strategical purposes, but none the less welcome.

They were almost at the end of the journey—not a journey that could be recommended, in spite of their preliminary optimism. They had nearly died of thirst, they had been charged by elephants, attacked by drug-maddened Somali, and Mrs Glover had been nearly killed by a leopard. In spite of those and scores of other adventures, or, as Mrs Glover puts it, "incidents," their chief thought had been—the route. Was it a practicable one? If not, why not? Could it eventually become one, and if so, how? What of their own experiences? The point that Mrs Glover could not help emphasizing to me, with a very small amount of pride, was that, in spite of everything, by the time they reached Ras Hafun, the most easterly point in Africa, the

lorries were still in excellent condition. To have achieved that much was undoubtedly a triumph, both for the cars and their drivers.

Such a conquest would make an excellent finale to this chapter, but characteristically, because of that very good finish, the Glovers decided to try to do more. "What about proceeding to Cairo?" they demanded. Quite impossible, it was reported to them; absolute lunacy! "What about a journey up the Red Sea coast, then?"

The horrors of those bare 2500 miles up the Red Sea coast I best realized by Mrs Glover's refusal to talk about them! The heat was unbearable. In places the cars took twenty-four minutes to cover their own length, and the fuel-consumption was a gallon a mile. The cost of petrol at this point was five shillings a gallon—in Ubangūi Chari it had been ten shillings. Is it higher anywhere else in the world? In French Somaliland the road entirely disappeared: in order to pass over the ground they had to tear the running-boards from the lorries. The sand was so hot that it was impossible to stand for any length of time on it, but they had to carry out repairs to the cars!

They came home by cargo-boat. It must have seemed a little corner of Paradise after their experiences—the rather dirty little port where they landed—a new, fairylike world. Mrs Glover knows how to enjoy it to the full, this world, with its hundreds, thousands, millions, of diversions and distractions. But it is safe to say that she enjoys it best when she is in the middle of the desert or the jungle. Like a fairy-tale world, when she seizes it its joys disappear in the wanderlust that will always hold her in its grip, the ache to be up and away once more into its unknown places.

So that there is really no end to this chapter at all.

CHAPTER III

FULFILLING A VOW

The Story of Mme Alexandra David-Neel, the First White Woman ever to visit the Forbidden City of Lhasa, in Tibet

The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men.[1]

SO sang the Psalmist, and his words were echoed down the ages by a woman with what she felt was righteous indignation. Did they not mean that any honest traveller had the moral right to walk as he chose, all over that globe which is his? And, standing before the frontier of the country from which she had just been compulsorily and, she considered, wrongfully ejected, she made a vow. It was a daring vow, a vow to travel through a closed land and to enter a mysterious city in which, so far as is known, no foreign woman and only a very few foreign men had ever managed to set foot.

But she fulfilled her vow, and in so doing made the most remarkable journey a white woman has ever made—four months on foot, in the bitterest winter weather, in the disguise of a mendicant pilgrim, the discovery of whose true identity would have meant at least great danger, if not death.

The city was the forbidden city of Lhasa, capital of Tibet, and comparable with Rome in the influence it exerts on the whole life of the country, for the Dalai Lama, a 'monk-sovereign,' is both the temporal and religious ruler, with enormous and far-reaching powers.

Tibet itself, in spite of its strategic position and its historic interest, has always been and still is the most inaccessible country in the world to foreigners. Innumerable

[1] Psalm cxv, 16.

stories have been written, based on the few fragments of information brought back from there by isolated travellers. A Dutchman penetrated the mountain fastnesses surrounding it in 1720, and a few Jesuit and Capuchin priests in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; an Englishman, Thomas Manning, reached there in 1811, two French priests in 1846, and a political mission or two have also been there.

The twentieth century did nothing to break down the barriers against travellers in the Böd Yul, as the inhabitants themselves call their country. Apart from British officials on duty, a few Europeans have, however, succeeded in entering Tibet. And one of these was the woman already referred to—Mme Alexandra David-Neel.

It had come about thus.

Mme David-Neel had been a strange child. From her very babyhood two unusual passions had possessed her—for travelling, perhaps inherited from her mother's Norwegian and Dutch forebears, and for solitude, the latter, maybe, from her father's Huguenot ancestors. Such a temperament is more akin to the mysticism of the East than to the mechanized materialism of the West, and it had expressed itself in the acquisition of knowledge of the East —of Oriental philosophy and the study of comparative religions. She had already made two journeys out east, when the French Ministry of Education recognized her attainments in these directions by sending her out yet again to India in 1910 for purposes of Oriental research.

In the following year the Dalai Lama of Tibet went to live in Kalimpong, a small town of British Bhutan. He had temporarily left Tibet on account of political trouble with China. He held himself in the utmost seclusion, and although Mme Neel had letters of introduction to him from high Buddhist personages, she was doubtful of being granted the privilege of an interview.

As it happened, the Dalai Lama was equally curious to

meet a European lady who could conjure forth such eulogistic testimonials, and he sent for her immediately.

The royal household was full of clerical personages clad in rich satins and gorgeous brocades of beautiful workmanship and colours. They talked with her much, and told her stories of their unknown land. They described its mountain-ranges, purple and orange in the distance, from which huge peaks rose, capped with snow, the strange contrasts between its giant glaciers and hot valleys, its waterfalls and half-frozen lakes. They painted another world to her besides these physical beauties—a world of learning and philosophy and mysticism locked up in its great monasteries, whose libraries held ancient literature and Buddhist scriptures and antique manuscripts unobtainable anywhere else in the world.

Two years later, having crossed the whole Tibetan range, she reached the Tibetan border, and made some short trips beyond it on forbidden territory. The glimpse that she received of it on that occasion was so entrancing and so tantalizing that the desire to explore it more closely never left her. A few years later she was able to make yet another trip—this time to include in it a visit to the Tashi Lama, ecclesiastical head of Western Tibet, whose headquarters were the city of Shigatze. Between the two scholars, Western woman and Eastern man, grew a real friendship from their mutual respect and admiration, so that the Tashi Lama asked Mme David-Neel if she would not stay and pursue her researches in a Buddhist nunnery or in a hermitage.

The Tashi Lama, however, possessed little temporal power, and Mme Neel knew that even if he wished it he could assume no real responsibility for her. So she left Shigatze and Tibet.

But always the thought of Tibet dragged at her heart. She did not leave Asia, but spent her time travelling in

Burma, Japan, Korea, China, and parts of Tibet that remain under Chinese control and which are open to foreigners. During these journeys she met learned religious masters of different sects and nationalities, developing both the practical and the theoretical side of the mystic and philosophic world into which she had been introduced, even to the extent of living two whole years alone in a cave on a lonely mountain on the Tibetan border.

After a fourth most eventful and difficult journey across the eastern province of forbidden Tibet Mme Neel reached Jakyendo, a market town and Chinese outpost in Tibet. From there she undertook a new expedition in forbidden territory, going southward towards the river Salween. She travelled on foot, accompanied by only one servant, in order to avoid notice. Her other belongings and luggage, including camera and requisites for botanical research, could follow her in a small caravan in charge of her adopted son, a young Tibetan lama named Yongden, who would try to pass himself off as a mere trader.

It was the end of winter. Most of the high passes were blocked by snow, and they experienced dreadful hardships in negotiating them. But they had actually crossed the frontier when Mme Neel was stopped. Though Yongden was travelling several days' march behind her, the contents of the boxes he was carrying—camera and the rest—had betrayed not only him, but his companion in front. Men had been dispatched to look for her; she was found and compulsorily escorted to the frontier.

There, full of indignation, she took the oath already referred to—an oath that she would not only travel again in the forbidden territory, but actually reach the forbidden city of Lhasa itself. She would dare what no woman had ever dared, or hardly ever dreamed of. Mad adventure as it seemed, she would not rest until she had reached her goal.

And so began her fifth journey into Tibet.

It was a very serious affair. With the exception of her trip towards the Salween river, she had generally set off with some ceremony under the guise of a Tibetan nun of rank. She had had caravans and mules with jingling harness; the villagers had clustered round to do homage to the lady-lama, impressive in her full lamaist garb of purple and golden brocade, and to ask her blessing.

On this occasion had anyone, even her two porter-servants, even guessed at her object it would have been rendered impossible from the very beginning. Her one chance of reaching Lhasa lay in assuming an effective disguise. She could speak the Tibetan language; she was well acquainted with Tibetan philosophy, religion, modes of thought. Her adopted son, the Tibetan lama Yongden, would travel with her. Could she assume enough of the Mongolian cast of features, dark sallowness of skin, to pass as his poor old withered beggar-mother? This *rôle* she would have to maintain not merely for a short period, but for months—months in which she would have not only to meet true Tibetans casually, but to live with them and sleep with them. Was she so imbued with the spirit of the life of the people to be able to pass as one of them without betraying herself for so long?

Only one answer remained: it had to be tried!

The first step was to satisfy the curiosity of the villagers on the border by a statement that she and Yongden were going for a botanical excursion in the neighbouring mountains. This enabled them to leave behind their luggage. There remained their two coolie servants: they must certainly not be allowed to see the strange spectacle of a European lady setting out with a load on her back.

After having gone a few miles along the road she put her plans into action.

"My feet are sore," she said to the men. "I cannot walk

any longer. Let us go down near the stream, and we will camp and make tea."

It was a plausible suggestion, and for the men the meal made it a welcome one. When she had swallowed a little *tsampa* (flour made of roasted barley) Mme Neel ordered one of the men to go up the hill to cut some dry logs. While he was away she told his companion that they would need only the absent coolie to look after them, paid him off generously, and dismissed him well pleased.

When the first servant returned he was told exactly the same thing, but was given a parcel to take in the opposite direction, lest he should fall in with the first servant. The parcel contained all that they could discard. There remained not even a blanket or a ground-sheet, only the clothes they were wearing. They did not dare to imagine what would happen to them when during the winter they were crossing mountain passes over 18,000 feet high. Food was the most important consideration. As they were to cross on their way unexplored and uninhabited regions they had to carry with them a large supply of provisions, and in order to bear the weight of these on their shoulders they had to discard all other luggage except a tiny tent of cotton, one aluminium pot—kettle, teapot, and saucepan all in one—one lama wooden bowl for Yongden, an aluminium bowl for his 'old mother,' two spoons, a long knife, and chopsticks, which could be hung from the belt.

So they set out on the first steps of the journey to the forbidden city. Their first stage was to lead them to the pilgrimage road that turns round the sacred mountain, the Kha Karpo, and to cross the Dokar Pass, 18,400 feet above sea-level, which forms part of the border of independent Tibet.

It was already night-time when they started. They did not dream how many hours they were to trudge before they could reach a spot which would afford them some measure

of safety. A swift river barred their crossing; the trail was often difficult to find in the dim moonlight; once it was barred by a landslide, then by a steep gorge. Even the right track, when they eventually found it, was not easy, loaded as they were. All the night they trudged on, not daring to halt, until towards dawn they reached a gloomy spot sheltered by dark trees, and Yongden declared that he could not go a step farther without rest and, if possible, a drink.

While he lay on the ground exhausted Mme Neel went in search of fuel for boiling water for tea. The drink was so comforting that Yongden fell asleep. But his companion ruthlessly awakened him, and they pushed on.

They had not gone far when they heard a voice above them. Without exchanging a single word, the two secret travellers rushed "like scared game" through the thick jungle, temporarily losing each other.

After that fright they decided that walking in broad daylight was too risky. Pilgrims might notice something peculiar about them, gossip on the other side of the border, and start inquiries. They would tramp only after sunset, therefore. Water was the great difficulty. For several hours they trudged without finding it, until utter exhaustion compelled them to rest, even though their path hung over the edge of a precipice. But they dared not wait, though more than twenty-four hours had elapsed since they had eaten or drunk, and they were not yet used to prolonged fasts. At last they came to a stream where some woodcutters were breakfasting, and while Mme Neel remained hidden underneath some leafy boughs Yongden climbed down the cliff to get some water, with which they made some buttered tea.

After a good meal of this tea, dried meat, and *tsampa* they began to apply the disguise with which they would enter Tibet. Yongden's was in reality no disguise at all. It was

merely the garments which he would normally have worn as a lama in a monastery. Mme Neel wore boots from Kham and an ordinary plain Tibetan dress, but unfortunately she had not been able to purchase a hat to hide her hair: she had only an old red belt to twist round her head. She therefore dyed her short hair with a wet stick of Chinese ink, lengthened it with jet-black plaits made from yak's hair, hung long earrings on her ears, and powdered her face with a mixture of cocoa and crushed charcoal. They now felt more confident to face any stray pilgrims they might meet on their journey.

At last they reached the approach to the pass to the forbidden land. Although it was only September, the valley was white with frost; water was flowing everywhere from springs down the rocky walls on both sides. From valley to silent valley they passed, until at last the Dokar Pass itself stood outlined before them, a depression in a gigantic, barren range, sacred ground, dotted with countless tiny altars and mystic flags. But they reached the top safely, uttered the Buddhist wish "May all beings be happy!" and began to climb down through black clouds, blizzards, and sleet. Unfortunately darkness fell before they had gone far; they missed the path, and were compelled to squat on the ground in the falling snow for six hours, until at 2 A.M. the moon rose, and by its melancholy light they were able once more to see faintly and to descend to the wooded zone.

There at the edge of a glade they rested and lit a fire, trusting to its flames to keep away the wild beasts. Yongden fell asleep; Mme Neel dozed, only to be awakened by a low sniff. A few feet from where they were lying she saw a pair of glimmering eyes and a spotted coat.

Once before, while wandering alone across the jungle of Nepal, Mme Neel had sat down by chance to rest by the lair of a tiger. While she was sitting there the huge beautiful beast had come home. It had stopped about ten feet

away from her, almost, she said, in astonishment. Woman and tiger had remained looking at each other steadily for nearly a quarter of an hour. Then, slowly, the beast had turned and gone away without harming her.

Now she remembered this, and somehow found reassurance from it.

"Little thing," she murmured to the leopard, "I have seen, close to, a much bigger prince of the jungle than you. Go to sleep and be happy."

And after a few minutes the leopard too went away.

One night, a few days after their start, they were overtaken by a party of pilgrims. Seeing a lama, they invited him and "the old woman" to join them and take food together. Lost in admiration of the magnificent scenery, Mme Neel neglected the mundane enjoyment of food, so that the pilgrims looked in amazement at her.

"Mother is with the gods," answered Yongden, hastily placing a warm bowl of tea before her.

"Is the mother a *pamo* [female medium]?" asked a woman wonderingly.

"My father was *ngagspa* [sorcerer]," answered Yongden gravely. "She was his initiated *sang yum* [literally, 'secret mother,' the wife of a magician lama]"—a *rôle* which inspired the pilgrims with such awe that after making the two a little present of butter they passed on quickly, which was just what was wanted.

As the days passed the weather in the heights became colder and colder. A bitter wind pierced the clothes of the two travellers, snow fell, but nevertheless they had to sleep through it uncovered, with their packs as pillows. Sometimes the sun would come out suddenly, turning everything to gold and restoring their drooping spirits. Once they passed through a deep gorge, so narrow that only a ribbon of sky was visible overhead. On the dark cliff of rocks on both sides had been painted and carved pictures of Buddhas,

Bodhisattvas, famous lamas, and deities of ancient times, and long portions of philosophical treatises and praises of the wisdom of Buddha had been engraved there.

Days passed of comparative tranquillity, when they loitered along beautiful valleys, waiting for nightfall before passing through the villages. Fear died down in their hearts, until one morning they met a well-dressed lady, covered with jewels and followed by three maidservants. She stopped before them, scrutinizing them.

"Where do you come from? Are you *philings* [foreigners]?"

Mme Neel, her heart thumping, made a pretence of laughing, while Yongden tried to attract attention to his own Mongolian features, and said, "She is my mother."

After a few more questions the lady passed on her way, followed a little later by her husband, on horseback, with another dozen attendants.

Was the disguise insufficient? Or were they overnervous? Before Mme Neel had time to decide sufficiently to allay her fears they met a well-dressed man walking towards them along the narrow path. With suitable humility the 'old beggar-woman' made way for him, but he stopped, removed the gun from over his shoulder and the sword from his belt, bowed down three times, and approached her with clasped hands and head bent.

Mme Neel was so paralysed with astonishment that she acted mechanically—obeyed an old habit acquired when she had lived in lamaist monasteries and laid her hands on the man's head. Before she had recovered he had once again buckled on his gun and sword and was gone.

"Did you see that man? Did you know him?"

"Not in the least," Yongden declared, and concluded, after he had heard what had happened, that the man had realized that Mme Neel was a *naljorma*, the Tibetan expression for one who has embraced the religious life and

followed the mystic path. Whatever the explanation, Mme Neel breathed yet another prayer for her safety!

They were now approaching a place called Thana, where, they had been told, was a frontier station. They arrived there at night near a temple. This provided the opportunity for a ruse. Yongden called out pathetically to the shrine-keeper for shelter, practically certain that he would not get up to receive a beggar at night. The trick worked, and they passed in safety to Yongden's loud laments: "Oh, how unkind to leave a poor, sick pilgrim in the cold!"

More passes, more pilgrims, more valleys, and at last a request by a pilgrim party for Yongden to tell their fortunes. A refusal would have been an unpardonable sin for a lama, particularly of the "Red Hat" sect, to which Yongden belonged. He told them well, and earned much gratitude and praise—so much, indeed, that it made him forget himself, and he started to tell them long stories of other pilgrimages, which Mme Neel, a little fearful, at last nipped by ejaculating, "*Karmapa kien no!*"—a pious expression which in their secret code simply meant, "Let us be off quickly!"

A little sulkily, the lama obeyed, but he was so vexed that on the next day, when they stopped to make tea near a village and the people gathered round them with gifts of wood, he refused to say a word, and only ate and drank, dumb to all questions.

"Who are these people?" asked a woman, but he answered nothing, and so distressed was Mme Neel by his dangerous behaviour that she did not notice what had been happening to her hands when washing their kettle, until another woman, in a low voice, whispered to a neighbour, "Her hands are white, like those of *philings*!"

Quickly Mme Neel, preserving her composure, rubbed her hands on the bottom of the greasy black pot. It seemed centuries before her companion rose. Where were they going, a man asked him. Yongden calmly replied that they

had made their pilgrimage, and that they were now going back to their own country.

"They are *Sokpos* [Mongolians]," offered another, and this was what the whole village thought, as, still silent, they left them and set out upon the greater pilgrimage to Lhasa.

The country was pretty, well cultivated, woody, and green, with occasional streams of clear water. Their route lay by a *gompa* (monastery), which they had to pass as quickly as possible, although they urgently needed fresh supplies of food. Their exertions sharpened their appetites, and when they could get barley-meal butter and bread they ate a large quantity of it. They tramped through some fields sufficiently deserted to make it safe for Mme Neel to rest there, while Yongden went back to the *gompa* to buy food, and once more set out again—towards a dark forest with huge trees and a ravine.

It had been snowing some days before, and white patches remained on the ground. They had to camp nevertheless, and hoped that if, instead of pitching their tent, they spread it over them, with a few leaves and twigs strewn over it, it would create an illusion of being merely a snow-patch. But they were over optimistic. Some traders, passing before day-break, noticed the strange effect. "Is that men or snow?" one of them asked.

Mme Neel and Yongden were laughing silently under the tent, but there was nothing for it but to put a bold face on it, and in a deep sepulchral voice Yongden intoned, "It is snow!" and crawled forth from it, while the men laughed heartily.

"Are you alone?" they asked him.

"Yes," he answered, and after chatting for a while they went their way.

But it was not long before yet another incident happened to make their hearts beat and imagine that they were doomed. One morning they were resting by a stream and

drinking soup when a man passed. According to the hospitable Tibetan custom, Yongden invited him to drink a bowl of soup. They then learned incidentally from him that they were loitering just in front of an official's house. They left with beating hearts, hastening out of the village, when a man ran after them. "You must come before the *ponpo* [chief]," he said.

With assumed composure Yongden put his load on the ground. "Let us go!" he said to the man, utterly ignoring his old 'beggar-mother.'

She saw visions, as he left, of their being escorted back to the nearest Chinese frontier, but at the very depths of her anxiety she wondered when and how she would make the next attempt. She had sworn that a woman should pass!

But the young lama returned in safety—plus a silver coin given to him as alms. The next official was not so easily satisfied by their story. They met him on the very same day, on the narrow, winding path. According to Tibetan custom, they threw themselves on the low side of the road, to show their respect. But then began a rain of questions. Where had they come from? Where were they going? When all had been answered the official still remained scrutinizing them suspiciously.

Anything to break that agonizing silence! Mme Neel, unable to stand it any more, broke into a begging chant: "*Kusho rimpoche, nga tso la sölra nang rogs nang!*" ("Noble sir, give us alms, please!")

The cringing pathos of her tone and gesture made some of the group laugh; the official took a coin from his purse, handed it to Yongden, and smiled at the 'old woman,' who answered the favour with the most respectful of Tibetan salutes: she put out her tongue as far as she could extend it!

The days passed in an endless succession of hard travel, through scenery sometimes magnificent, sometimes gloomy, but always diverse in character. There were endless frights

—so many that they reverted to walking by night, instead of by day—endless incidents that ended amusingly, instead of tragically. One day Mme Neel had an adventure that demanded all her iron nerve.

They had reached a point in their journey where it was necessary to cross the glittering waters of a river—the Giamo nu chu—a crossing effected by cable.

The appearance of the cable was somewhat terrifying. It was a single cable fastened to poles on both banks, 200 or 300 feet above the swift current, which rushed through a gorge between gigantic walls of rock. The cable sagged alarmingly in the middle, but from this drop the passengers, tied to a wooden hook that glided along the cable, were hauled up by ferrymen on the other side by a sort of long towing-rope. These ferrymen did not live near the rope-bridge, and came there only when the number of people to be passed meant enough profit for them. Mme Neel and her companion might have waited there for weeks, but fortunately the day after they had arrived a lama came with a dozen followers and a few other people.

When Mme Neel's turn came she was bound to a Tibetan girl with rough straps. The ferryman started his jerky pull; it went on for a little while, until suddenly they heard a splash below them, and slipped back quickly into the sagging dip of the cable. The towing-rope had broken!

The Tibetan girl looked up to the point where the strap to which they were suspended was fastened to the hook.

"You need not fear," said Mme Neel. "I have called my *Tsawai lama* [spiritual father] to protect us."

But the girl continued to tremble. "The strap is coming loose," she declared.

Mme Neel looked up at the knots, but could not see anything wrong. If the Tibetan lass was right—and she should surely know—it was merely a question of time before they dropped into the swift current below. At last they saw one

of the ferrymen coming towards them, hands and feet round the rope, like a monkey. They swung perilously. "She says that the knots of the straps are coming loose," Mme Neel told him.

He looked hastily. "I cannot see it well," he said. "I hope it will hold fast till you arrive at the bank."

Mme Neel also hoped, but could not help doubting, as the ferryman, having adjusted a new towing-rope and returned to the bank as he came, started hauling them along again by jerks.

At last they were safely landed on the cliff, in a little crowd of sympathetic ejaculating women. The ferryman, having examined the knots and discovered that they were quite right, cursed the girl who had caused them all such a fright to such effect that she became hysterical. Yongden seized the chance of the commotion to beg "for his aged mother, who had suffered such agony while hanging to that rope," with the consequence that all those present made them liberal offerings of food, and they set out loaded—a little performance which was not merely farce, for such offerings preserved them from the necessity of buying food and showing that they possessed money.

Sometimes, it was true, they would have preferred to do without such offerings, for in certain poverty-stricken villages the food which they were handed was indescribably foul.

One evening they arrived at a very miserable dwelling, having already been refused hospitality at many huts. There was a fire burning, but obviously no food at all in the place, except for a little *tsampa* for the family. Generosity in such circumstances could not be permitted, and Yongden brought forth a rupee, which he said he had had given to him. Would their host go and get some meat with it?

"Do not bring back a piece which is decayed," bade Mme Neel, knowing the ways of Tibetans, and the man said, "Oh, no, no!"

When he came back he opened the cloth wrapped round his purchase, and a fearsome odour suddenly filled the room.

"Oh," said Yongden, in a voice trembling with nausea, "it is a stomach!"

Mme Neel knew only too well what this portended. The Tibetans have a horrible habit of filling the stomach with the entrails and such-like parts of a beast and leaving them to decay inside for weeks, or even longer.

"Here, Mother; here is a saucepan," said the kindly woman to Mme Neel. "You can prepare your supper."

To handle the horrible mass which disclosed itself was beyond even Mme Neel's powers.

"The old mother is ill!" announced Yongden resourcefully, seeing the state she was in. "Make the soup yourselves. I want everybody to have a share."

The two peasants did not wait to be invited a second time. Finally the foul broth was ready. "Take some, Mother. It will do you good!" they urged her. But Mme Neel confined herself to groaning in the corner. Yongden could not escape, for the rumour of a pilgrim who spent a rupee on meat and then could not eat it would have filled a whole village with gossip, and he had to choke down a bowl of it before he could make them believe that he had had enough.

Progressing in the direction of the Sepo Khang Pass, one of those mysterious incidents befell them such as may bewilder the most experienced traveller in Tibet. They were lighting a fire with a few twigs when a little boy ran towards them, bowing three times, as Tibetans do before great lamas, as a deep token of reverence.

"My grandfather, who is ill, has told us of your coming and that he wanted to see you. Please follow me."

"It is not my son whom your grandfather expects," Mme Neel told the boy. "He does not know us."

"He said the lama who would make tea on the stones,"

the child insisted, and went and fetched a young *trapa* (lamaist monk), who also addressed himself to Yongden. "Be kind enough to come. My father is ill and awaits you —the one and only person who can direct him to a happy place of rebirth in the next world. He told us all this morning that you would come down that hill. All has happened as he said. Now please be kind to us and come."

Mme Neel could not withstand his tears and pleading, and they were led to the farm and to the place where the old man lay.

"Lama," he said, "I knew that you were to come, and I waited for you, to die. No one but you can utter efficaciously for my benefit the sacred words which will lead me to the 'Land of Bliss.' Have compassion on me, bless me, do not refuse me your help."

The old Tibetan seemed very much alive, and for certain religious reasons Yongden hesitated, trying to hearten the sick man instead. But the farmer entreated him, until Yongden gave in and pronounced the ritual words which are uttered at the deathbed of those beyond hope of recovery, leaving the dying man with a perfect serenity on his countenance.

As the days passed the weather grew colder and colder. It was not only the season: they were travelling through passes sometimes 18,000 to 19,000 feet high, so that continual motion was the only method of keeping warm. But the high icy air was stimulating, making them feel capable of superhuman feats of endurance.

On one occasion they had been walking for nineteen hours without having stopped once for rest or refreshment. Mme Neel felt not tired, but extremely sleepy, and decided to halt. There were still some hours to go before the sun should rise, and with the cold wind that was blowing, even if they escaped being frozen, they would probably catch pneumonia. So they determined to light a fire, and

gathered some twigs for this purpose from the bank of the frozen river. But when they tried to light them they could not get a single spark out of the flint and steel, which had become cold and wet.

"*Jetsunma* [Your reverend ladyship]," said Yongden, "you are, I know, initiated in the *thumo reskiang* practice. Warm yourself, and do not bother about me. I shall jump and keep my blood moving in that way."

Mme Neel, it was true, had studied under two *gompchens* (hermits) this strange art of increasing the internal bodily heat. Once having mastered this art, it was possible to sit, as she had seen hermits sitting, night after night, entirely naked, motionless on the snow, sunk in meditation. She had endured the test given to disciples who can dry on their bodies in the heart of winter sheets dipped in icy water. She had even inured herself to wearing the single thin cotton garment for five winter months at a 13,000-feet level. But to continue the practice was not needed when she returned to warmer climates, and she had resumed normal clothes, although she did, indeed, on occasions practise the art when opportunity offered.

But now, it seemed to her, was not the time to look purely to her own comfort, for in spite of his suggestion Yongden must be considered. While pondering for a solution she had an idea. Might she be able, perhaps, to warm and dry the wet, cold flint and steel on her body, as she had once been able to dry dripping sheets? While Yongden went to search for fuel in pessimistic obedience to her commands she put the flint and steel and a pinch of moss under her clothes and began the ritualistic practice. Soon, as was right, she felt the sense of flames round her, warming her, until her body burned. The loud report of ice cracking on the river near the place where she was sitting awakened her from a half-doze. She walked towards their tent, knocked the stone, and a spark, and yet another, sprang out of it,

igniting the little pile of grass and cow-dung she had made. When Yongden arrived he gaped with astonishment. "How have you done it?" he demanded.

Mme Neel smiled. "It is the fire of *thumo*," she answered.

As they continued their journey the snow became more and more alarming. When they went to sleep under their tent the roof became loaded with snow and collapsed on top of them. Walking was difficult—almost impossible when the snow lay softly over a previous fall that had been frozen. At some points it blocked the path; at others blotted it out completely. They plodded on, not sure of their direction, when suddenly there was a cry from Yongden. He had slipped and fallen into a ravine, knocking his head against a rock and spraining his ankle.

"I shall try to carry you," said Mme Neel.

But the effort proved impossible, and Yongden endeavoured to creep along a few steps at a time, leaning on her and on his staff. It seemed years before they reached an earthen cave, where they took refuge, and where Mme Neel was able to massage and bandage the ankle. They had eaten snow to quench their thirst, and it had brought an internal cold which was more numbing than the frozen ground. If something were not done they would obviously die of cold and hunger. They spent hours discussing the problem, and finally concluded that there was nothing for it but for Mme Neel to go out and search in those wastes for some village or villagers. It was a gamble—but to remain inactive was suicidal.

Eventually she walked out and down the valley. The whole day she trudged on, passing two deserted encampments, but not one living being. When night fell she was still far from the cave, had not met a soul, and, worst of all, had lost her way. At this critical point a little glimmer showed in the distance. It was Yongden, who, almost

paralysed with fear for her, had lighted a small taper to guide her back.

They ate the last of their food-supply, except for a little tea-dust, and lit a fire. "Do not worry about me, *Jetsunma*," said the lama. "I know you do not fear death, and I do not fear it either. Let us sleep." And although their plight seemed almost hopeless they lay down and slept soundly.

On the following morning Yongden could stand. With the aid of Mme Neel he managed to limp along, and they at last reached some wooded hills, where Mme Neel made him a crutch from a branch, so that he could get along without her aid. Her own circumstances were not too easy, for the soles of her boots were worn out, and her feet were bleeding. They tramped on and on, through another night and more falls of snow, looking like two queer, ragged scarecrows.

So they dragged on, until they were utterly exhausted and had yet met no shelter. To camp in the deep snow was impossible. It seemed as if the end had indeed come when Mme Neel knocked against something under the snow. It was the top of a rustic fence. She laid her hand on the wood, and followed it until she arrived at the gate of a summer camp, from which point she vaguely discerned a large square cabin and several smaller ones.

Without waiting for the lama, she entered, and found a horse-shed with some firewood and dry cow-dung in it. The thrill with which they lighted a roaring fire was greater than any Mme Neel had ever experienced. On its flames they boiled some water, in which they sprinkled their last grains of barley-meal, and as a last rite before going to sleep Mme Neel consulted her calendar. It was December 22.

The first job on the next morning was to repair Mme Neel's shoes. After that they considered the two possibilities before them. A summer camp meant that they were

far from an inhabited spot. Could they ever reach it? On the other hand, they would die of starvation if they remained where they were—decidedly the worse alternative. So, shaking their last atom of tea-dust into some boiling water, they drank it and once more took to the path—through forests of holly-oak, beneath ever-falling snow. They had walked till noon before they realized that they were on the wrong path. There was nothing for it but to retrace their steps all the way back to the summer camp. By the time they had reached it they were giddy with starvation, and had only a bowl of hot water to stay its pangs. Half delirious, they heard imaginary sounds of bells in the distance. Yongden insisted on scouting round for the right path; when he returned, declaring that he had found it, his eyes were glowing and feverish. He sank into a fitful sleep, but a little later struggled up, muttering deliriously, and trying to force his way out of the door into the snow. Mme Neel, overpowered by his supernormal strength, had to think of a ruse: she threw some more branches of wood on the fire, and the great flames broke his nightmare, and he allowed himself to be put to sleep again.

That was Christmas Eve. It was late on Christmas Day when they awoke and boiled the water, throwing into it their last eatable possessions—a piece of fat with which they rubbed the soles of their boots to keep them waterproof, some bits of untanned leather, and a pinch of salt. Their Christmas dinner!

Once more they left the camp, took a fresh path through thick forests, over a river, until they noticed a small hut in a narrow clearing. As they approached it they were astonished to see a man standing at the door. "Come in," he said.

There were a dozen more inside, seated round a fire. When they heard that the travellers had come over the pass they could hardly credit it. Much impressed by the

heavenly protection which the two must have enjoyed, they offered them buttered tea and asked the lama for an oracle regarding a messenger they had sent off, before they themselves should depart.

Next morning was the sixth day of the two travellers' fast, which they could hardly consider broken by a bowl of tea left them by their hosts. Fortunately, early next day they came upon some cottages, where they had no scruples about knocking at the first door they came to. With the hot soup they were given they were able to proceed quite a long way on their journey. Sometimes they were thankful to receive a handful of barley-flour; at other times fortune bestowed such things as dried apricots upon them. They begged hospitality, and were sometimes granted it, sometimes refused. They passed by amazing monasteries built high on rocky mountains. They met people generous and mean. They travelled through unexplored parts of the country of the dreaded Popas, who, according to the Tibetans, are born robbers, so unscrupulous that only the utterly destitute as a rule dared to go through their hills. And it was here that, in spite of their appearance of utter beggary, Yongden and his 'old mother' were attacked.

They had been sleeping in a cave when a man appeared and, looking at their two bags, asked if they had anything to sell. Another man joined him, and together boldly they took the two travellers' spoons and refused to give them back, trying to pull the tent away at the same time. All appeals proving useless, Mme Neel drew a revolver from under her dress and fired to miss, the shot—as she intended—so alarming the robbers that they turned and fled.

Encounters with brigands are fairly common in Tibet, and the two travellers were soon to meet some much more dangerous specimens of the breed. One evening, a few days later, they were walking along their narrow trail when seven men appeared. Mme Neel passed safely by—

unworthy of their notice—but Yongden behind her shouted, "They have taken my two rupees!"

More he dared not say, but Mme Neel saw that their hands were on the load he carried—a much more dangerous booty. Fire she could not this time, for they would immediately have killed the lama with their sharp swords. What could she do that would not entail their instant capture and recognition, now that they had already gone so far towards their goal?

She could assume the *rôle* of the initiated and ordained wife of a black *ngagspa*—and this she did. Screaming and cursing, she called on all the deities of the Tibetan pantheon, using their most terrible titles. The one who rides on a saddle made of bloody human skin, the companions of Death, crowned with bones, and the Angry Ones who feast on fresh brains—all these and more she called upon and begged to avenge them.

The thieves were so petrified by these unexpected and most impressive imprecations that they quailed and cringed. "Do not be angry, old mother! Here are your two rupees! Do not curse us any more!"

Excellently as the adventure ended, Mme Neel was thankful to have no more such encounters in the forest.

The next one that impressed itself on their minds was with a man dressed in the plain garb of the *gompchens*. This man sat down near their fire without uttering a word, until at last he drew from beneath his robe a skull fashioned to serve as a bowl, and in it took from them a little tea. Suddenly he addressed Mme Neel. "*Jetsunma*," he said, "what have you done with your monastic robes?" Her heart stopped beating. The man must have seen her elsewhere dressed as a lady-lama, and had recognized her. Yongden tried to interpose with some stammering correction, but the strange traveller imperiously ordered him away. "Do not try to remember who I am, *Jetsunma*," said

the hermit, when they were alone. "I have as many faces as I desire, and you have never seen this one."

They then held a long conversation on subjects pertaining to Tibetan philosophy and mysticism, until finally he rose and vanished as noiselessly as he had come. Only then did Mme Neel realize that she had been listening to the stranger all night long!

There was yet another mysterious encounter.

One night, when they were sheltering in the large upper room of a house, another lama traveller was shown in. He proved to be both learned and a philosopher. At first Mme Neel listened to Yongden's conversation with him from the humble distance that custom ordained, but soon the interest of it made her forget prudence, and she came forth and took part in the discussion, quoting from old books and referring to the commentaries of famous authors, until the night was far advanced and they all fell asleep.

All through the next day Mme Neel was tortured by fears at the recollection of the conversation and her imprudence. Had she endangered the success of her project once again in showing her learning, which might seem strange in a poor lay woman and attract undesirable notice? She had hardly gone to sleep that night when she seemed to wake up and to see a lama standing before her, an unknown lama clad in a white habit, with a tress of hair to his heels.

"*Jetsunma*," he said to her, "this dress and the *rôle* of old mother do not suit you. You were braver when you wore your lama robes. You must put them on again later, when you have been to Lhasa. You will get there. Do not fear."

She strove to answer him, but he was not there. She could only see, through the aperture of the small tent, the shining golden roofs of the Temo monastery, far away.

Four months had passed since Mme Neel had set out with her adopted son on the journey to Lhasa, and at last

they had reached the final stage, after adventures of which only the most sketchy outline has been given in this chapter. For a fuller account the reader must be recommended to Mme Neel's own book, *My Journey to Lhasa.*[1]

A miracle seemed to protect their entry into the city itself, for, as the mysterious lama had prophesied in her vision, she did enter it, and spent two whole months wandering freely round it, no one suspecting that for the first time in history a foreign woman was beholding the forbidden city.

The miracle was a furious storm of dust—an immense yellow curtain of sand which blinded pilgrims, the city, the roads, and the *Potala*, or great palace on the hill.

When the storm abated they were in the city, staring round, hardly able to believe it all, wondering whither to go next.

"You want a room, Mother?" said the voice of a young woman. "You come from far. You must be tired. Follow me."

They followed her to a ramshackle hostelry with a magnificent view of the scenery, including the *Potala.*

They were in Lhasa.

"Do you allow me now to say that we have won the game?" she asked the faithful Yongden, who replied, "Yes. *Lha gyalo.*" ("The gods have won.")

For the rest of the story—of how Mme Neel managed to penetrate the *Potala* itself, and her descriptions of the shrines, the large historical monasteries, the religious ceremonies, races, and pageants of the Tibetan New Year festival—readers must procure Mme Neel's own book, for, alas! there is no space to describe here the further wonders of her most amazing travels.

It must suffice to say that two months later she left Lhasa and visited the southern provinces of Tibet. Then she took the road to Gyantze, the town of Southern Tibet which has

[1] Heinemann.

become a British outpost, and finally reached a private bungalow. The inhabitant could hardly believe his ears as he heard what was apparently a Tibetan woman addressing him in English. He directed her to the fort where the officials were quartered, and her arrival there produced the same effect. When she told them that she had come from China, that for eight months she had wandered across unknown parts of Tibet, and had spent two months in Lhasa, no one could find a word to answer her. It was hardly possible to believe this unbelievable adventure.

But it had, indeed, happened, and for the amazing feat which has been briefly described here she was made a Knight of the Legion of Honour and awarded a gold medal by the Paris Geographical Society, the Dupleix medal for explorers, and the first medal of the Sports Academy of Paris.

Yet this achievement, superb as it was, is only one fragment of the passion for travelling which led the baby of five to explore a wood beyond the bounds of her parents' house. Before returning once more to Europe she had spent fourteen years sojourning in the little-known parts of Asia. It is the part of the world which has always appealed most strongly to her deepest feelings, and in 1935 she left once more for China, to live, to give, and to learn.

CHAPTER IV

KNITTING SEVEN TIMES ROUND THE WORLD

The Thirty Years' Travels of Gertrude Benham

WHEN the Mount Kamet Expedition had pushed its way far up into the wilds of Tibet, had reached the very last native village, and was setting off into the realm of eternal snow its members had the shock of their lives to find a small tent in which a quiet Englishwoman sat peacefully knitting—her invariable habit in foreign lands. This was Miss Gertrude Benham, a lady who may be the greatest traveller of all living Englishwomen, yet who is so little known that, except for an occasional paragraph in some Indian or New Zealand paper, her name has hardly appeared in print.

Miss Benham travels for the sheer love of seeing and painting new places, especially mountains. She has been round the world seven times, has visited every part of the British Empire, except Tristan da Cunha and a few other small islands, has climbed more than three hundred peaks of ten thousand feet or over, and has been travelling for more than thirty years, mostly on foot; yet she has never written a book, never advertised, and very seldom given an interview. And here is the most remarkable, the most nearly incredible, part of the whole story. She has done all this at an average cost of under £250 a year!

"I was quite a girl when I became bitten with the love of mountains," Miss Benham told me. "My father took me to Switzerland, and at once I felt I had 'come home.' I think that I am naturally a mountaineer, for I have no fear of heights, I am a good walker, and I am happy and thankful

to say that I have enjoyed good health all my life. I have been to Switzerland seventeen times, and have climbed practically every important mountain, except for some of the Aiguilles."

"The Matterhorn?" I suggested.

Miss Benham nodded. "The Matterhorn presents no special difficulties now. Indeed," she added, with a smile, "the main danger these days on that and the other popular peaks is from the tourist who, climbing carelessly, disturbs stones or boulders, which may fall on others climbing below."

"You must have had narrow escapes."

"One only, and that in my early days of climbing. With two Englishmen and two guides I was ascending Mont Palu, in the Engadine. The ice-slope at the top was covered with snow, and the guides had to cut steps. One of the Englishmen slipped. I think he had not put his foot deep enough into the step. At the next moment he had fallen and dragged the other Englishman down. There was a guide at each end of the rope. The two Englishmen were third and fourth, and I was second. Luckily we—the two guides and myself—had time to brace ourselves and take the shock. Then, while one guide and I anchored the rope, the other guide cut steps down and brought up the two men."

"What was your first journey out of Europe?"

"To Canada. After my parents' death I was left with a small income, and I had also saved a little money. With this I determined to visit the Rockies. I reached Banff in the spring of 1904, and early in June moved to a *châlet* on Lake Louise. It was a late season: there was still ice on that lovely lake and much snow on the mountains. They are not high mountains, for few exceed 10,000 or 11,000 feet, but they looked big and imposing. At first I tramped on the lower levels, flower-hunting in company with other

tourists. The Rocky Mountain flowers are not equal to the Swiss, but there are many varieties, and I was lucky enough to find a little saxifrage which was previously unknown.

"On June 27 I made my first ascent, climbing Mount Lefroy. My companions were a Mr Frost and two Swiss guides, Christian and Hans Kaufmann. We started at four in the morning, and I have seldom seen anything more lovely than the exquisite glow as the sun rose and tinged the great snow-slopes with a deep pink. Contrasted with the turquoise blue of the sky, the dark trees, and the shadowed lake it was an exquisite scene. Unfortunately it did not last long, and rain began to fall as we reached the uncomfortably named 'Death Trap.' This is a narrow passage between Mount Lefroy and Mount Victoria which is constantly swept by avalanches from both mountains.

"The rain changed to driving snow, and Mr Frost and I thought that we had better return. But Christian roped us, and silently took the way upward. For three-quarters of an hour we struggled on, then, with a loud crack, Christian suddenly disappeared. A snow bridge over a crevasse had given way. Luckily the crevasse was full of snow, so that he did not fall far, and we soon had him out. We were now in thick mist, and climbed and climbed, wondering if this mountain really had a top. Quite suddenly we came to a stone man, a cairn, and realized that we had reached the summit.

"The descent in the mist was difficult, but all went well. As we left the glacier the sun came out, and the rest of our walk was splendid.

"I spent the whole summer climbing in the Rockies and Selkirks, and greatly enjoyed it. The views were magnificent, except when blurred by the smoke of forest fires. The forests are full of fallen timber, which becomes tinder-dry under the blazing summer sun of July and August. On one occasion we had rather a scare, for on our way down from

an unnamed peak, which we called 'No. 5,' we saw smoke in the valley, and feared that our camp was afire. Soon flames lit the whole hillside, extending from the tree-limit almost to the bottom of the valley. We found our camp safe, but had a restless night, for if the wind had changed the fire must have come right down upon us. On the following morning we got away by the lower trail, and even that was uncomfortably near to the flames. That fire burned for weeks, although gangs of men were fighting it the whole time.

"I think my hardest climb was up Mount Assiniboine, which had only twice before been ascended, though many attempts had been made. It is not now considered a difficult peak. It was not easy to reach the base, for many creeks had to be forded. We were three days going and three returning, but climbed the peak in one day. We were lucky in having perfect weather.

"I stayed until winter began to close down, when I went on to New Zealand, *via* Fiji, and from there to Australia, *via* Tasmania. From Australia I went to Japan, where I tramped and climbed, returning to England *via* India, Egypt, and Corsica. That ended my first journey.

"I travel, when possible, in cargo-steamers, and when abroad live on the country. That is, I eat what the people eat. For instance, when in India my actual expense for food has been no more than five rupees (7*s.* 6*d.*) a month while up in the mountains.

"Oh, I have a good appetite!" she added, smiling. "I do not starve. I will give you an instance of a cheap food almost unknown to Europeans. In the hills of Northern India the people roast grain; then, when they want food, they grind this grain in a stone mill, and then mix it into a stiff paste with water, called *sattu*. This is a very nourishing mixture, and by no means unpleasant.

"I walk everywhere. I do not care for riding, and I dislike

motor-cars. I am never lonely. In my spare time I knit or do embroidery, of which I am very fond. I spend a great deal of time in painting and sketching. I have walked across Africa from west to east."

"Alone?"

"Quite alone, except for my boys. I had, of course, to have carriers for my tent and food-boxes. I had seven boys and a cook."

"Did you shoot game for food?"

"I have never used firearms in my life. I have never even carried a pistol, though often begged to do so."

"But what about lions and leopards?"

"They never troubled me. True, one night four lions came nosing round my tent, but they did me no harm and went away. I often heard them not far off, and leopards frequently came near. I think that the wild things know it when you mean them no harm. Now, take giraffes. They are among the shyest of creatures, yet one day in British East Africa I came upon six giraffes which simply stood and looked at me and did not attempt to bolt. I wish I could have photographed them."

"Did you have any difficulty with natives?"

"None whatever. On the contrary, very much kindness. Often, when I approached a village, the chief would come out to meet me, and would offer me food and quarters. The natives are like the wild things. If they see a big *safari* approaching they get nervous. These people, they think, will eat up the country. A solitary woman is different. They welcome her."

"When was it that you crossed Africa?"

"In 1913. I started through Northern Nigeria, and went through the Cameroons, French Congo, Belgian Congo, and out through German East and British East. It took me eleven months."

"Did you climb any mountains?"

"Yes—one of the volcanoes in German East Africa. But four years earlier, in 1909, I visited and climbed Kilimanjaro. This is the highest mountain in Africa, being 19,700 feet, and no woman had ever before ascended it. Kilimanjaro is an old volcano, and volcanoes as a rule are not difficult to climb. My difficulties were to get porters and, when I had got them, to reach the base of the mountain. I had to wait three days at the mission-house at Dabida before I obtained porters, and these, as I found, were men who had never climbed.

"We had a hard walk on the first day, part of the way up a stony watercourse. We camped under a gorgeous sunset, near a great clump of lovely lilies, the blooms pure white, but with a crimson streak on each petal. On the next morning we could find no path, but struggled through bush and grass and the most terrible thorns. At midday we found a pool under rocks and lunched and filled our canteens, because beyond us was the Serengeti Desert, where there is no water at all.

"The next day's march was very trying—intense heat and thick red dust. The stupid porters insisted on drinking all their water, and by midday were so exhausted that I had to walk behind them to keep them going, and the dust they scuffled up nearly suffocated me. I saw a giraffe and much other game, and at four was glad to reach a clear stream, where the men drank enormously and bathed.

"We reached Boma on the following morning, and crossed the border into what was then German territory. The road was good—so, too, was the weather—and against the sky towered the two great peaks of the mountain, Kibo, the higher, glistening with snow. But now my porters began to give trouble. They kept on stopping, and when I ordered them on threatened to run away. I could not make out what the trouble was. The African native's mind works in a mysterious way. At last we reached the



GERTRUDE BENHAM, THE WOMAN WHO LIKES TO 'WALK' ROUND THE WORLD

Polyfoto



GERTRUDE BENHAM ON ONE OF HER WALKING TOURS THROUGH AFRICA

Moravian Mission at Mamba, and I was kindly invited to stay the night. I asked about a guide, but was told that I must go on to a place called Moshi to find one.

"On the following day the porters were reluctant to start, but I managed to get them going, and we climbed through forest cut by many deep ravines. One of the boys had a blistered foot and was very lame, so that we did not reach Moshi till six o'clock. There I secured two guides for the climb, and in the morning bought food for myself, blankets for the porters, and rearranged the loads. It was afternoon before we got away, and now we were above 4000 feet and climbing steeply. We could not reach our proper camping-ground, and I had to pitch my tent on a slope so steep that my bed was on a slant, and it was all that I could do to keep from slipping out of it. By this time we were at 7000 feet, and it was very cold at night.

"We got away at half-past six in the morning, and climbed through lovely forest—enormous tree-ferns, begonias in full bloom, and masses of flowering shrubs and vines. We camped that night near the tree-limit, and on the next day found open country and easier slopes. About an hour after starting we came across two human skeletons lying in the path. The porters at once threw down their loads and vowed that they would go no farther. I argued and bribed, and at last they started again, but presently stopped a second time and flatly refused to go on.

"I confess that I felt almost desperate, but I resolved that, rather than give up my mountain, I would go on alone. I began to pack my rucksack, and then one of the porters relented and said that he would come, and the guides, who had so far refused to carry anything, said that they would carry wood and water, while Saidi, the cook, agreed to carry the cooking things. The other porters I sent back to the forest camp to await our return.

"The weather changed, and we had showers of hail. It

was bitterly cold, and I was grateful to reach a cave, where we were to spend the night. Some snow lay in a corner of this cave, and the porter stared at it. He had never seen snow before. Then he picked some up in his hands, saying that he was going to take it and show it to Bwana Mleli at the mission. I put some into my cup near the fire, and when it melted and only a little water remained the boy's surprise was laughable.

"'*Tagati!*' he muttered. 'It is bewitched.'

"He would have no more to do with it. But when daylight came snow was everywhere, though fortunately not heavy, and the sky was clear.

"I had been told before starting that the guides would go no farther than the plateau where the cave was, but one did walk a little distance with me to put me on the right track. Then I went on alone. I was now at 16,000 feet, and although I am fortunately immune from mountain sickness, yet naturally progress was slow. Presently I came to glacier ice covered with snow, and, climbing steadily on rock and snow alternately, reached the edge of the crater at two in the afternoon. The highest point seemed to be some distance to the left, but there was not much difference in the height, and since the snow-slope was steep and I had not too much time I decided to return. Clouds cut off the distant view, yet the snow and ice world around me, so near to the equator, was worth a struggle to see. I turned and started down.

"Mist was thick, and it was not easy to find my way, but I had my compass, and every now and then discovered marks made by my ice-axe as I had climbed. All the same, I was glad to find myself back on the plateau before night fell. Even then I could not tell where the cave was. Though I had taken my bearings carefully at starting, all the rocks looked hopelessly alike. I got out my whistle, which I always carry, and blew two or three blasts, and, to

my relief, a small scarlet figure appeared in the distance. It was one of the guides, wearing his bright red blanket, who escorted me to the cave.

"My cook boy greeted me with the remark, 'I think you no come back. Where I get my money?'

"The men had burned all the wood they had brought up, and there was no fire left. They wanted to start down at once, but, as you may imagine, I had had enough tramping for one day. We spent a chilly night, for it snowed again, and in the morning everything was white. Luckily the clouds had blown past, and it was beautifully clear, with a magnificent view of the second peak, Mawenzi, a glistening white cone. We made good time downhill, and reached the first camp before eleven. There we found the other porters. I gave them money and sent them down to get food. The guide and porter I also dismissed, for I had made up my mind to stay here a few days, sketching.

"The views were glorious. Mount Kibo stood out splendidly, and so did Mount Meru. The latter has a most striking resemblance to the famous Japanese mountain of Fujiyama, even to the subsidiary peak of Little Fuji on the slope. At an enormous depth beneath I could see Lake Jipe, and beyond it the Ugweno Range. The gorgeous sunset effects and the brilliance of the starry firmament at night were unforgettable sights. This camp was at 10,000 feet, and naturally it was very cold at night, but there was plenty of wood, and I generally had my dinner by firelight outside my tent.

"The boys came back on the following day with eggs, bread, rice, bananas, and other provisions and a kind note of congratulation from the mission. So I stayed for four days; then went down to Moshi, where I settled my account for guides, food, and the like, and on the following day started on my return journey by way of Taveta. Captain L., the Commissioner, who resides there, was out,

but his boy gave me tea and cake and put up my tent in the compound. Later Captain L. returned, and we had dinner together. On the next day he took me to Lake Chala, a lovely little crater lake on the slope of the great mountain. It is a strange spot, and very difficult of access, for it is almost entirely surrounded by sheer cliffs. Though it has no apparent outlet or inlet, the water, I was told, is always at the same level, and crocodiles live there. It is supposed that a subterranean passage connects it with Lake Jipe. Indeed, this must be so, for how otherwise could crocodiles have reached its deep, dark water?

"We returned across the Serengeti Desert without incident, and on the way overtook a caravan of what the Babu station-master at Voi called 'ass carriages'—little wagons pulled by donkeys, which are used for carrying goods to the railway. We saw a lion, and at night their coughing roars echoed through the bush. Having arrived at Mwatate, I packed my tent and such things as I did not require and walked to Voi, where I took train for Mombasa, on my way to Madagascar and Mauritius.

"Years afterwards—it was in 1927—I saw a paragraph in *The Times* to the effect that Kilimanjaro had been climbed for the first time by a woman."

"And you did not contradict it?"

"I was in the West Indies at the time, and the paper was some weeks old. I did not trouble to do so, but I understand that a friend of mine wrote and spoke of my ascent eighteen years earlier."

"Africa has a bad reputation for fever. Did you never suffer?" I asked.

"Never in Africa. I had a small case of drugs with me, but I very seldom took quinine. I did, however, take the precaution of always sleeping under a net. Exercise and simple food are, I am sure, the main essentials of health. I believe in taking plenty of liquid, mainly tea or hot water,

and salt with one's food. I am not a teetotaller, so I speak without prejudice, but I think that alcohol in the tropics should be tabooed, except in case of illness. I think, too, that the average Briton is not nearly careful enough about his food. He leaves its preparation entirely in the hands of his native cook, who is apt to be careless and dirty. He is not half careful enough in cleansing pots and pans. Much illness is due, I feel sure, to this cause. In this respect German domestic arrangements are much better than English. If every young fellow who is going abroad to Africa, India, or any hot country had a few lessons in cooking and housekeeping before leaving home it would save many a doctor's bill and many a valuable life."

"Which country do you like best, Miss Benham?"

"I am very fond of Switzerland, and have been there seventeen times, but the Swiss mountains, beautiful as they are, can hardly be compared with the Himalayas. Altogether, on different journeys, I have spent ten years in India, and have made many long trips in the Himalayas, sometimes spending a whole summer at about 10,000 to 12,000 feet. That was in 1914. I had twice before visited Kashmir, and this time I started from Simla. Simla is not a good place to find servants, and I could not get a *shikari*, who is far more useful than a professed cook. I engaged a bearer who had excellent chits (testimonials), but who turned out to be a lazy, lying rascal. This man, named Tooni, and another, called Natthu, made up my personal retinue, and for the rest I had either six coolies or two ponies for my tent and baggage.

"The country was lovely. Pomegranates in bloom, masses of fragrant white wild roses, Persian lilac, and, farther up towards Manali, larches, maples, and dark pines —scenery that reminded me of the Canadian Rockies. The fly in the ointment was the behaviour of my servants, who would go far ahead and leave me to manage the coolies.

Often I had to wait a long time for my tent and food. I was forced to spend some days at Manali, for I heard that the Rotang Pass was not yet open. This pass is dreaded, because of the terrible wind which often blows there, and which, at its worst, cannot be faced. Luckily I had a fine day, but when we reached Koksar, on the other side of the pass, we found the bungalow almost buried in snow. The servants' quarters were quite buried.

"Three Englishmen, with their servants, were there already. They had dug the snow away, and they and their three dogs were occupying the two rooms. They turned out and gave me one room, while the servants had the two bathrooms, and had to do the cooking there into the bargain. The cooking was a problem, for there was hardly any wood. There was a village close by, but we could not reach it, for it was on the other side of the river, and the canny villagers took down the bridge each winter, for fear that it might be damaged by ice.

"Since I could have no fire I wrapped myself in my blankets and consoled myself with my books. Wherever I go I take a few books. Besides the Bible and a pocket Shakespeare, I have *Lorna Doone* and Kipling's *Kim*. In cloth covers made by myself these books have been my companions in every continent.

"That night I awoke with water dripping on my face. It was raining hard, and the roof leaked. I moved my bed four times, but each time caught a fresh drip. At last I put up my umbrella and slept peacefully. I was glad to get away after two wet and chilly days. We crossed the river higher up by a snow bridge, which cracked uncomfortably as we passed. I heard that it fell on the following day.

"The scenery in these hills reminded me of Norway. Spring was breaking, the willows were turning green, and the lower slopes were carpeted with iris. Other less pleasant things came to life. My tent was invaded by earwigs—

hundreds of them. I found them in my food, my bed, even in my stockings. I visited the temple at Triloknath, where there is a fire that is always burning. The priest told me that it goes out by itself when a Rajah of Chamba dies.

"Beyond Triloknath the valley narrowed into a rocky ravine, and here the path ran along the face of great precipices. Sometimes it was a mere gallery built along the face of a rock-wall. It was all up and down. At one time we would be crawling along just above the level of the thundering river, then, a little later, looking down from the height of the top of St Paul's into the foaming depths. What made it really difficult, and in some places dangerous, were the massive remains of snow avalanches which had caught upon the path. Sometimes we had to cut steps across these. Then, too, falling stones released by the melting snow above kept rattling down, and we had to be always on the watch for these. Near a place called Rauli, where we spent a night, I was awakened by a tremendous roar. An avalanche of rocks had fallen across the very path along which we had travelled a few hours earlier.

"Farther on we had to cross the river by a swinging rope-bridge. There are pleasanter ways of crossing a raging torrent, and I confess that the first time I ever had to cross one of these bridges I was not happy. I heard of an English colonel, a very keen sportsman, who, when he had to cross one of these swings, used to blindfold himself and make two of his men lead him across.

"We met large flocks of sheep and goats on their way up to Ladakh. Each carried a pack full of grain strapped on its back. Later I saw other flocks carrying salt and borax down to the plains from Tibet. After all, why not? In the Andes the natives use the sheep-like llama as a beast of burden.

"As I went farther and farther into the wilds I became an object of curiosity to the people in the hill villages. They

would touch my umbrella, my watch, my ivory bracelet, and my dress. But when they wished to touch a gold-crowned tooth in my mouth I had to draw the line. Many took me for a doctor, and one man brought a horse with a sore back for me to cure. I was sorry that I could do nothing for the poor beast. We crossed passes higher than the summit of Mont Blanc, and the flowers in the valleys were a constant delight, among them blue poppies, which are now becoming so popular in English gardens, and lovely auriculas.

"The people were nearly always kind and friendly. Some were surprised that a white woman could walk and climb as I did. One chief in a small hamlet exhibited me to his people with pride. 'This,' he said, 'is a *mem-sahib* who walks like a goat.'

"It was May when I started on this long walk. I did not get back until August, and have seldom, if ever, had a more enjoyable tramp."

"Were the natives always so kind?" I asked.

"Not always. In 1908 I went across South America from Valparaiso to Buenos Aires before the tunnel through the Andes was completed, and I walked over the pass, the chief danger being the mobs of cattle driven over from the Argentine to Chile. Though it was an interesting experience, it is not one I would repeat. The natives are not like those in Africa and Asia, and South America is the only part of the world where I had my boxes opened and my property stolen. That was at Mollendo in February 1934, and the cases were stored in the Custom House."

"You have not said anything about Australia or New Zealand," I suggested.

"I had a delightful walk across the South Island of New Zealand. It was most interesting. The country, the climate, and the people were equally charming. I walked from station to station, sometimes covering twenty-eight

miles in a day. In each case I was passed on to the next station. To me, accustomed to sleep in a tent and manage for myself, it was at first embarrassing to walk straight up to a house—often a big house—and ask for hospitality. But these people took it as a matter of course. They always seemed glad to see me. I was entertained like an honoured guest.

"I had one rather amusing experience. I came to a house quite late one evening, and was received by the cook, who told me that the family were away and the house locked up. He seemed at first a little dubious about what to do with me, for, as he informed me, he had 'never had a lady tramp before. However,' he continued, 'Bill, the foreman, has a tent in the paddock, where you can sleep. He'll bunk with the rest of us.'

"So I had the tent, which was quite comfortable, and in which Bill had left his watch and all his possessions, and shared the men's meal in the morning."

"And in all your wanderings you have never been in danger, Miss Benham?"

She smiled. "I would not quite say that. I was once crossing the Bay of Bengal in a steamer with eighteen hundred coolies aboard, and cholera among them. We were caught in a cyclone. Things were very unpleasant for a time, and the coolies were terrified. Still, we came through safely. Then I was in Damascus during the Druse rebellion in 1927. There was a good deal of firing going on, and we were not allowed outside the town; even in the streets one was not safe from stray bullets. They even came through the windows of the mission school where I was staying, and one cut a lock of hair from a girl's head, but did not hurt her."

"And you have never been ill?"

"Yes, once. I was staying in Calcutta, and was given a bed with a ragged mosquito-net. I was badly bitten. On

the next day I took ship for Singapore, and began to feel very unwell. All the way to Singapore I grew worse and worse. Most fortunately for me, I had friends at Singapore who took me in and put me to bed. And there I lay for nine days with a very severe dose of malaria. It was my only attack, and I have every reason to be grateful for a sound constitution and good health."

"One last question. I hear you have presented your collection of curiosities to the Plymouth Museum. Why to Plymouth? Is it your native town?"

"No. I am a Londoner. But some years ago I landed at Plymouth and visited the museum, which I thought most beautifully arranged. So I asked the authorities if they would like my collection, and they said that they would be glad to have it. I was a little surprised to find that this collection was valued by their expert at a thousand pounds. I am hoping that it will be of use to students. I am told that my sketches of mountains all over the world will be valuable in the same way. They show the contrast of geological formations."

"And now have you finished your travels?"

"Not quite. I have one more trip in prospect. I am leaving shortly for the New Hebrides. That will be my last journey. Then I shall settle down on a little property I own on the south coast. But I shall have plenty to think about and, perhaps, to write about."

CHAPTER V

SEARCHING FOR FLOWERS AT THE 'TOP OF THE MAP'

The Story of Isobel Wylie Hutchison, the Young Scottish Botanist, and her Travels

A GIRL stood in a garden on the Mount of Olives—a twentieth-century girl in one of the oldest gardens known to modern man—Gethsemane. The Mount still justified its Biblical name: there were gnarled grey olive-trees all round; beneath them rambled sweet-smelling beds of purple violets, brilliant stock, and other gay flowers. Silhouetted against the blue Eastern sky rose tall, pointed cypresses. Their cones lay scattered on the ground. "I will take one. Perhaps when I am back in Scotland," thought the girl, "it will serve to remind me of this day."

And so the adventure began—at least, so she says, although there are so many threads to the life of Isobel Wylie Hutchison that one might pick up any one of them at random and follow it backward or forward to, as the journalists say, a 'story.' For this young Scotswoman manages to combine with distinction in her own single experiences the careers of a botanist, an explorer, a painter, a poet, and a writer. She takes her colours wherever she goes, and paints even though the brush has frozen before it has been put to paper. She has been commissioned to collect specimens of flora for the Royal Herbarium at Kew and by the British Museum, and to purchase curios for the Museum of Ethnology of Cambridge. She has been in places where no other white woman has ever trodden, and she was awarded, after her Alaskan journey in 1932, the

Mungo Park medal by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society for her "geographical services in Arctic lands."

But to go back to the cypress-cone.

It was put away in an odd corner of her luggage. When it was discovered many weeks later, on opening the bags, it had ripened and scattered its seeds. Two hundred of them were sown in the Scottish garden of the old house where the child Isobel had made her own little garden hedged in with boxwood. The seeds put forth tiny seedlings, which became branches, and then tiny trees. They reminded her not only of that past day in Gethsemane, but also of the fact that there were other places in the world unspoiled by automobiles, petrol-stations, and concrete roads. The immediate question was: which was the nearest? The obvious answer was the empty islands of the Outer Hebrides. What could there be more delightful than a walking-tour through the chain of long islands?

She went, and she walked, and because she was a writer she sent the story of her experiences to the *National Geographic Magazine* of America. When the substantial cheque arrived in payment she remembered one moment—a moment when she had stood high in a white lighthouse at the Butt of Lewis and tried to imagine the last outpost of Europe, which lay 600 miles north over the green Atlantic. The cheque brought the opportunity to realize her dreams. She walked into an Edinburgh shipping office and asked for particulars of sailings.

There were no particulars, or very few and slender ones. The steamers thither, although they touched Leith, came from Copenhagen. And as for her idea of walking all over the island and obtaining a road map in order to help her, well, who could blame the office clerks for laughing? There was no road map, because of one simple fact: there were almost no roads! And this was 1927.

She got to Iceland, her firm intention to accomplish her

design of walking shaken, but not utterly destroyed. She could walk, even if there were no roads!

Once in the islands, however, the natives were hardly more encouraging. Such a thing as she contemplated was unheard of. Travelling in the interior was done by pony. "To walk! It is impossible," said one guide pityingly. "It takes many days with ponies and sometimes two or three guides. There are many rivers to cross. No one goes on foot here."

"Some day I should like to go by myself, on foot," insisted Isobel Hutchison, who was not a Scotswoman for nothing. "I could hire ponies and guides over the rivers."

"Can you talk Icelandic?"

"Not a word."

The man looked at her, laughed, and walked off.

But she did as she wanted. She secured a portable map, with a black outline indicating a 'track' on it, and set off, with the birds and the flowers for almost her sole companions. She walked through great glacier-covered hills, through barren moorland, over tablelands of stones, through passes. At nights she stayed in lonely mountain farms. She hired ponies for the rivers and guides, and she reached her journey's end—260 miles—in fourteen days, a creditable effort considering the heavy rucksack she carried. As she finally struck the road—a real road with the impress of a motor-tyre on it—at the very end she saw, resting on the hillside beneath the snow, a great splash of rainbow—the mountain's farewell.

The return journey from such a wonderful experience might have been a little dull, but, as it happened, Isobel Hutchison fell in with two Danes on the boat, who were on their way home from Greenland, that strange country bordering on the North Pole. The three travellers talked much about it—its midnight sun, its Northern Lights, its Eskimo population, who not so many generations ago were

living in a Stone Age—and the amazing contrasts that its history provided. Geologically it is a land that still lies far back in the Glacial Age, but nearly a thousand years ago the Vikings had founded there two famous Norse colonies that had flourished for five hundred years. For generations after that Greenland had remained a hidden land. Expeditions were sent to rediscover it without success, and when the Englishman Martin Frobisher actually landed there in 1578 he did not know that he had stumbled upon the lost island.

Such stories as these and many others fired the Scottish girl with yet another ambition—the determination to visit that northern isle. But for two hundred years Greenland had been a Danish colony, and it was difficult to obtain permission to visit it. No British woman had ever before landed on its closed shores, and even if a permit were given to her in consideration of the fact that she wished to do scientific work there the facilities for taking her there were almost nil. Only one boat a year called at East Greenland from Denmark, and that was an annual provision ship sent from Copenhagen in August, when the dangerous belt of winter ice, forming a perpetual barrier to the coast and locking the shores, should have been broken up. On two occasions within memory—during the years 1896 and 1907—the ice conditions were so severe that the boat was unable to reach the colony. Even though once she was so near that the inhabitants were able to see her, she was obliged to return without landing her supplies, and ever since she has carried with her sufficient stores for the winter, in case she should be locked in by ice and unable to return in the same year.

Miss Hutchison had to wait two years before she both gained permission to visit the country and secured a place on a boat going there. But at last she found herself northward bound, ostensibly on a mission to collect botanical

specimens, which was, of course, the truth, but not all the truth.

The captain of the boat was full of curiosity and admiration. "Come with me, and I will show you where to find the best flowers when you reach Julianehaab." And he drew a rough chart for her.

Her first excursions round the island were botanizing ones. She travelled up valleys and in remote fjords in Southern Greenland where no other Briton and only very few Danes had ever been for nearly a thousand years, since the days of the Norsemen, who had left coffins and bones and wooden crosses and fragments of clothing.

She passed under cliffs at whose feet drifted icebergs, by crags void of vegetation. She lived in tents, sailed in *umiaks*, or boats of sealskin stretched over a light framework of wood, and she made a five or six days' voyage up one fjord. A "Scottish Expedition," she laughingly called it, and it consisted of herself, "Tuluk," an interpreter, a steersman, rowers, and a kayak-man, or handyman.

Such sights, such days, such nights! When the vessel took off through a violent hurricane she said to herself that she was on her way back from a fairyland where the sun shone at midnight and the sea froze to the shore—and what can be added, except that in the very next year she returned, this time for almost twelve months, and by the grace of the Director of the Danish Greenland Office a Greenland householder, the house being a little wooden painted affair perched up in the mountains, above the rocks, with a maid and "all luxuries." For is it not luxury to have a morning bath filled by warm water which has been carried up as ice from the harbour?

After her former visit to the country she had been approached by certain horticulturists to ask if she could collect Alpine seeds and plants, for there are nearly four hundred flowering plants in this near-Arctic island. This

was to be her most serious business, therefore. (One of them, incidentally, the *Saxifraga cernua*, very common in Greenland, is found upon the summit of Ben Lawers, in Scotland, but is now almost extinct.)

Since she was to remain through the winter on this occasion she had to make preparations for clothing herself adequately, with such articles as, for instance, *kamiker*, or topboots of sealskin, with dogskin soles inside.

Food and clothing are by no means varied in that remote island. One takes thankfully what one can get or what is suitable for the climatic conditions. Miss Hutchison varied the usual diet of seal-liver or chops of polar cod with a tuck-box from Scotland, but in spite of the latter luxury one of the great occasions of her stay in Greenland was a lunch-party, with a long and, for Greenland, elaborate menu of *matak*, or skin of white whale, seal-liver paste, seagulls' eggs, blood pudding, and home-brewed ale.

Many were the adventures and romantic, thrilling sights which every day seemed to bring, but one of the most romantic must have been the climbing of Kilertinguit.

Kilertinguit is one of the highest peaks in North-western Greenland, 6250 feet in height. It was first climbed by Edward Whymper in 1872, and again in 1879 by the famous Danish mineralogist K. J. V. Steensdrup, with three Greenlanders, but has never been scaled since. Isobel Hutchison, although she had never done any rock-climbing, could not resist the temptation to attempt it.

One morning in July, when the snows had melted, she set off with an Eskimo guide of Norse descent. For three days they waited for propitious conditions, until at last the mist lifted, and bitter winds blew, and they started the ascent, with small tent, camp-bed, sleeping-bag, camera, ski-stick, and a sixpenny Union Jack! Nobody knew exactly how long the climb might take; the mists still hung about. Insects and mosquitoes were the greatest plague, but there

were compensations for a botanist in the great variety of Alpine flowers on the lower slopes. And imagine finding a yellow poppy at a level of 6000 feet, its delicate petals frosted under a coating of ice!

The slopes of loose shale, covered with snow, were difficult to climb, but the summit was reached at last—a dangerous platform with an abyss falling away from it—and when the mists cleared away the shining water of a fjord far below. But they had no eyes for a distant view, however superb—just for a little heap of stones before them, enshrining a green glass bottle containing a paper on which were scribbled the names of the Danish mineralogist and his three companions. The young Scotswoman added their own names and the Union Jack and replaced the bottle—the last adventure before once more returning home with not only a botanical collection of rare interest and value and a series of unique water-colour sketches, but a mind full of awe at the wonders of Nature which she had seen.

The success of "the Scottish Expedition" made it quite certain that there must be other chapters to follow. The book which she had written, *On Greenland's Closed Shore*,[1] had awakened wide interest. She had proved her merits as a careful, thorough scientist. What was to follow? Natural tastes, maybe heredity—who knows what formed the sympathetic link?—drew her to lands of cool, pure silence, ice and snow. Whatever the cause, the result was that she found herself, three years later, bound for 'the top of the map'—the Arctic Ocean beyond the Bering Strait—on her way to gather wild flowers in Alaska for the Royal Herbarium of Kew.

Now, Alaska is chiefly known as the scene of the great gold rush of 1898, but to a botanist it has even greater claims to be considered interesting. It has extremes of

[1] Blackwood.

climate that are almost unbelievable, for, although only twenty degrees of latitude separate the south from the north coast-line, the former has an almost tropical vegetation, whereas all along the latter are naked tundras, wastes of snow and ice, unexplored ranges of mountains, and long stretches of unpenetrated coast.

It has other strange contradictions about it. Although geographically it is part of Canada, it belongs to the United States, who have done very well out of a deal by which they purchased it in 1867 for 7,200,000 dollars. The result is that there is a boundary between the two countries (indicated by a broad belt cut through the wooded hillsides to the far-off limit of the tree-line) and all the formalities that go with it.

It was along the northern wastes of Alaska that Miss Hutchison proposed to sail until she reached a certain Herschel Island. There she would remain until there was a possibility of starting on her homeward journey by the great Mackenzie river of Canada.

The journey out was a quite unheard-of one for a white woman. Not only because there were merely a few fragments of railway in Alaska, but because to accomplish her scientific duties she would have to travel for the most part where, as she put it, "American Express Companies and tourist itineraries no longer functioned."

For the first part of the journey such difficulties did nothing to hinder her enjoyment. She passed the old Russian town of Wrangell, founded in 1830, and one of the oldest 'white' settlements in Alaska; she went through Skagway, which was a city of 15,000 in 1898, but whose greatest excitement now is the arrival of the train, down the centre of the village street! She sailed 1358 miles down the mighty Yukon until she reached Nenana, where the great explorer Stefansson had inquired previously on her behalf of the Pacific Alaskan Airways if they could take her

by 'plane to Nome. Having reached Nome safely, if considerably poorer, owing to the high cost of transporting her luggage, she first dealt with the pressing question of getting to Point Barrow, where the Hudson's Bay Company had promised, if possible, to pick her up about the 22nd of July on their supply-ship the *Anyox*.

"You can't get there yet," she was told. "This winter's been the longest we've had for years. The ice is still thick as far south as Teller."

Would the *Anyox* wait for her? That was the question. She was due at Barrow on the 22nd of July, and did not call in at Nome, but Miss Hutchison was told that it was quite impossible for the British boat to keep to the date, owing to the ice.

Actually the *Anyox* never even reached Barrow at all, for she damaged her bow and had to be rescued by the U.S.A. revenue cutter. But the botanist discovered a small ten-ton vessel, which sailed round the coast, trading at the Eskimo villages, selling them fruit, radios, gramophones, even silk stockings. And if it did not pretend to offer her comfort it at least afforded an excellent opportunity for collecting plants and curios, and she clinched with the offer of a passage which the merchant-owner made her on the *Trader*, as the boat was called.

The boat was not due to sail for five weeks. In that short time the botanist managed to gather, with the help of the kind botanist-commissioner of Nome, over two hundred specimens of the 278 species of flowering plants known within fifty miles of Nome, and to make a collection of over five hundred specimens, to which two hundred were later added between Nome and Barrow. She even made two attempts to send root specimens of Nome's primulas to Scotland, but they did not survive the journey, although they were hurried off by aeroplane. This field-work she varied with nature photography—an operation so delicate

that a position of one-eighth of an inch or less too near the flower is able to ruin the photograph.

But the five weeks ended, and there began one of the most extraordinary journeys that any young woman has ever made.

Point Barrow was 500 miles distant. If there were no contrary winds and if they did not get caught in the ice they should reach it in about five days. But the very day after she left a strong gale sprang up during the night, and the *Trader* was forced to run for shelter into the bay behind America's most westerly point—Cape Prince of Wales—and wait there for two days.

Again not unprofitable days. In that far corner of the earth—incidentally, the site of America's only tin-mine—Isobel Hutchison found a hillside ablaze with wild flowers, and spent the interval adding to her collection, until a fair wind blew at last and they set off again for Point Hope, one of the most interesting Eskimo villages in Alaska.

The ever-pressing danger of ice forbade more than a brief stay of two hours there. The coast of Arctic Alaska is one of the most difficult to navigate in the world. Not only is there the shifting ice-pack to contend with, but there are shoals of islands enclosing shallow lagoons, most of which are uncharted and have to be sounded before even a small boat like the *Trader* might put into them. Before they had gone far the little boat found herself hemmed in by the ice-barrier, and so impenetrable did it seem that she cast her anchor on an ice-cake. By early morning, however, she had drifted back with the ice about twelve miles!

The men who navigate those seas must have courage, experience, daring, patience—all the virtues, indeed, of men whose sole reliance must be in their God and themselves. They must have sufficient faith in their judgment to take risks, but not to gamble. Even the shrewdest of them must lose the battle sometimes, a loss which may mean the surrender, not only of himself, but of his boat.

There is a 'phantom ship' of the Arctic seas with a tragic story behind it.

The *Baychimo* was a fine vessel, belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company. Unfortunately the 'freeze-up' caught her in 1931; she was compelled to winter in the ice, and broke anchor and drifted out to the Bering Strait under a winter gale. Since that time she has been sighted only twice. On the first occasion it was possible to reach her by means of a dog-team over the ice, to board her, and to retrieve her valuable cargo of furs and other articles. But it had never proved possible to salvage her completely or free her from the ice in which she is swept about at the mercy of winds and currents.

The *Baychimo* has become an awesome legend in that part of the world. Isobel Hutchison had only just heard her story when, to the surprise of every one, she chose to make her third appearance.

The *Trader* had just cast anchor in a bay at Wainwright when out from the shore ran a skiff to bring them the startling intelligence that the *Baychimo* was out there in the ice, only twelve miles off shore. Could the *Trader* get to her?

Immediately the captain, Pete Palssen, lifted their anchor and set off on the chase. Soon the faint black hull of the derelict ship showed in the midst of the moving floes of ice. Anxiously watching the wind—for a slight change might trap the little *Trader* herself in the outward-drifting pack—they moved forward between the great cakes, not all the care in the world being able to stop a jar against the ice which lifted the sputtering kettle from the galley stove.

In the book in which she afterwards embodied the story of her Alaskan journey, *North to the Rime-ringed Sun*,[1] Miss Hutchison devotes a chapter to their meeting with the 'ghost-ship.'

[1] Blackie.

Nearer she loomed now, lifted out of the ice to within a few feet of her keel, the wrecked charthouse and bridge amidships showing, even from a distance, signs of the reckless pillage the vessel had undergone from her previous plunderers. . . .

Could *Trader* make it? At first sight her task seemed impossible—the floes were so large, the ship only a small craft of ten tons. But Kari, poised like a seagull near the summit of his tall mast, cried down directions to Pete in the pilot-house below as the leads opened out.

It was the thrill of a lifetime, and I watched spellbound the myriad colours of emerald green upon the fantastic ice-cakes, lovelier than any water-lily. At last, when success seemed about to desert us, Karl spied a lead turning towards the very cake upon which *Baychimo* was poised, her giant hull, rust-stained and battered by the frozen seas, looming tower-like above the little *Trader*. She was riding upon a pan of ice which looked already almost upon the verge of breaking up, though it might be that the winter freeze-up would set the stranded ship upon yet another year's wandering.

It was no easy matter boarding *Baychimo* when at last *Trader* triumphantly drove her anchor into the cake which she rode. But at last, up a broken wooden ladder and a precarious rope suspended from her tall hull, I was hauled on board by willing hands.

It was like bursting into a Robert Louis Stevenson story. The hold was open, and, half rifled as it had been, still held a galaxy of strange cargo. But nothing could be done to salvage more than a few odd articles, for the *Trader* was far too small a vessel, and all they could do was to retrace their passage back to open water, through a rapidly gathering mist. By the time it had lifted on the next morning the 'phantom ship' had sailed again for an unknown port.

That was the last day in August on which the wind blew with sufficient strength to send the ice-pack seaward and open a lead to Barrow. The *Trader* was held in Wainwright by contrary winds until August 16. If she could not reach

Barrow and leave it before the end of the month the risks of being caught and held by the freeze-up on her return from Herschel were too great to justify the venture.

"But," said Pete, the captain, "there's Gus Masik at Barrow, with his schooner. He might take you along from his place at Martin Point, four hundred miles east of Barrow. It would only be a couple of days by motor-boat to Herschel. Or even if the freeze-up caught you at Martin Point you could wait with Gus till the sea was safe to cross with dogs."

"A dog-sledge with three hundred pounds of luggage!" exclaimed Isobel Hutchison. "No, I must get round to Herschel and Aklavik before freeze-up if it's humanly possible. Surely we'll make Barrow in time?"

"It all depends on Baron Metovisky," replied Pete. 'Baron Metovisky' is the Alaskan name for the north-east wind.

On August 15 they had tried to pierce the ice-barrier to northward, but had been driven back; they finally left on the next day through the fog, and managed to crawl twenty miles before they were again barred by the ice. Sometimes they anchored to it; sometimes the little ship charged it gallantly, bucking her way with perilous jars through the cakes, finding her depths at every moment.

Thousands of miles of icy wilderness lay round them—bleak sandspits, a grey flat coast, white walls and grey flat cakes of ice so large that sometimes their hearts contained green lakes of crystal ice-water, from which the *Trader* replenished her butt.

One evening they anchored near the entrance to a little lagoon. Over the ice-field twilight was mingling with the oncoming dawn in colours of rose and saffron, grey and red and gold. "The scene was so lovely," wrote Miss Hutchison,

> that in spite of the hour (it was nearly 1 A.M.) and the icy wind I sought for my paint-box, while the men retired to a well-earned sleep. I had seen no lovelier sight since the Southern

Cross dropped behind us into the Pacific than this silent return of light amid the stillness of the ice-fields.

Lovely as it was to the artist, to the men it meant more anxiety. Unless a strong east wind should come to unlock the ice which encircled them they would be prisoners all the winter. Prisoners they were till the last day of August, when for once everything conspired in their favour. Suddenly the wind shifted rapidly; a solid wall of ice retreated visibly; the little *Trader* pushed off, and, after coasting up and down for some time, bucked the last floes and reached the harbour opposite the village of Barrow, where the flag at the post-office was flying to greet them.

As fortune would have it, the trader Gus Masik had just arrived there with his boat the *Hazel*, and Captain Palssen suggested that Gus might find room in it for Miss Hutchison.

Gus sized her up reflectively. "Well," he said, "it would sure be tough luck if you had to turn back now when you've pushed on here through so many obstacles. We haven't much of a place for ladies on the *Hazel*, but if you'll take what we've got and don't mind roughing it you can have my berth in the cabin. There are three down there, but it's the driest, and, anyway, I'll be on deck most of the time. But you'll have to take your chance of being frozen in again round the point. We've got to wait here till the last possible minute, and chances are that we'll get caught ourselves this year round there."

It was her last hope of getting east, and a slim one, but she seized it on the spot, and said good-bye to the *Trader*, to her damp old bunk under the low deck, the draughts-board, the galley fire, the tin mugs, and the three good friends she had made on board, feeling almost homesick as she did so.

The next few days she spent in searching for specimens of Eskimo curios for Cambridge University, until, on September 9, the *Hazel* was ready to push off. There were Gus

Masik, his engineer, and two natives, on board, and there was Isobel Hutchison.

There are not many people, born and brought up among all the comforts of a civilized country, who would not have shuddered at the idea of taking her place, but Gus Masik knew better.

"How many people would give their ears to be where you are to-day!" he said to her one morning, as she finished washing up the breakfast things. "Not many have seen what you are seeing. What a lot to tell you will have when you get home again!"

And Isobel Hutchison was the sort of person to agree with him. "I shall be sorry when it's all over," she told him.

They were setting out, as they all knew, on a race with the ice. They sailed when they could, slept, ate, when they could; also, of course, ate *what* they could—caribou stew, tinned goods. They called at villages to unload their cargoes, dispensing hospitality to the natives where possible, hastening off before the impending advent of the freeze-up. They passed by the Endicott Mountains—jagged blue peaks rising from flat tundra.

"Many of these," Gus told the young Scotswoman, "no white man has ever trod. They are full of mountain sheep and bears and wolves—yes, and maybe gold too!"

On and on they sailed, almost every day providing some new thrill, some new interest. At last they reached a long, narrow sandspit surrounded on all sides by the sea, and anchored off the flat, sandy shore. Isobel Hutchison saw the ruins of an old native house, one little Eskimo hut made of driftwood and the quaint home-made 'round-house' of wood, turf, and canvas.

A chorus of dogs greeted them; a boat put out to meet them. The native who manned it spoke some English.

"You know, I think you never comin' back. I nearly cry!"

"Well, here we are, home at last," said Gus, with relief in his voice.

For this barren, isolated island was Gus's trading-post, and on its bleak but hospitable shores the botanist was to live for five whole weeks—a prisoner on a snow-covered strip of shingle about a mile long and about a hundred yards wide, for the motor-boat driver refused to risk the journey to Herschel: it was too late. There had been nothing for it, therefore, but to settle down as Gus's boarder until the sea-ice was safe for a dog-team, a situation which, Miss Hutchison admits, would have been unconventional in any region but the Arctic. That aspect, however, never occurred to sensible Gus.

"You are lucky to have landed right by the grub-pile," he impressed upon her, but he added later, "Though, mind, you took an awful chance travelling alone in these parts. This is the most godforsaken corner of Uncle Sam's attic; the revenue cutter never gets in here; there's not a hospital or a school or a mission nearer than Barrow, and that's over four hundred miles. You're the first white woman I've ever heard of that's stopped off at Barter Island or Martin Point."

He added more, none of which was exaggerated, but only succeeded in raising the calmest of replies. "I never take any chances," the young Scotswoman told him. "God always blazes my trail. I should not be here now if He hadn't."

"You really believe that?"

"Absolutely."

And Gus paid her the compliment of believing her.

Life on Sandspit Island was too different to be dull. There was the catching and cooking of food; there was even botanizing; and there were household duties, including washing the linen, which froze stiff as a board the moment it was put on the line. Indeed, Gus told her that

on one occasion he had had the sleeves of a new shirt cut clean off by the hurricane wind when hanging in this condition.

Before the botanist could set out on her sledge-journey east she would need special fur clothing prepared from reindeer-skins and fawn-skins, and many interesting visits were exchanged between the young Scotswoman and the native seamstress who was to make a *parka* for her in return for tobacco, calico, and other Arctic luxuries.

On November 3 it was decided that the last lap of the journey to Herschel could be attempted, and Isobel Hutchison passed for the last time through the wooden door of the little hut, clad in reindeer *parka*, mitts, trousers, and boots. The man who had been appointed to drive her by sledge had failed to turn up, so Gus took his place.

They had 120 miles to drive and only four dogs to carry themselves and a mountain of luggage—a total cargo of one thousand pounds. The sleeping-bags, the tuck-box, and dried fish for dog-feed were included in this.

The trail led over rough sea-ice and tundra. The going was heavy, and the route sometimes difficult to follow. On the first night they found shelter in an abandoned cabin; on the next night in the cabin of acquaintances, who, by the laws of Eskimo hospitality, offered them reindeer stew. On the following night they found another deserted cabin, but after this stage the trail was almost impossible to find, and Gus had to go ahead to pick it out, leaving his companion to guide the team from the runners of the sledge. This had disastrous consequences, alas, for which she was severely reproved. Fortunately Gus was able to retrieve the 600-lb. load of luggage which had been upset, and put things right.

At last the snowy wall of the tundra rose abruptly some twelve feet or so from the sea.

"The boundary-mark must be somewhere hereabouts,"

he told her. "Stay here and hold the dogs, and I'll look for it."

There, sure enough, it was—a small grey obelisk, Demarcation Monument.

"Guess you want your picture taken there. You're the first white woman that's entered Canada *that* way, I'll bet!"

And in that "vainglorious attitude," as Isobel Hutchison puts it, Gus took her picture.

That did not mean the end of the trek. On and on they went. One night they built a snow-house and camped for the night in its tiny crystal chamber, walls, floor, and roof shining like diamonds in the light of a candle frozen into the floor. More travelling, more camping, this time under a hospitable roof—so it went on until at last a little group of houses came into sight—nearer and nearer, until they themselves were almost at the doors.

A tall, dark young man stepped forward as Gus drew up his team.

"Miss Hutchison, I presume?" he said. "The police-boat from Aklavik was here at the beginning of October, the latest run they've ever made up here. They hoped to take you back with them."

"Guess Gus's work is done," said that gentleman with a triumphant smile. "You're sure in safe hands now. Trust the Mounted Police."

Two days later, in the same place, Isobel Hutchison shook hands for the last time with the friend to whom she owed so much. Making friends and losing them is one of the saddest joys of an explorer's life.

After Sandspit Island Herschel Island was almost luxurious, with chairs to sit on and plates for dinner. Once upon a time the island was considered one of the most remote inhabited places in the world; in the last two or three years the aeroplane has opened it up in a surprising manner.

Aklavik, for which she was bound, was still some 130

miles distant, and more travel by dog-sledge had to be arranged—a driver and team of eight dogs. It was an impressive run in the frozen silence, with about 70 degrees of frost, as cold as even a native considers it fit to travel in. Isobel Hutchison, perched upon the load, was often compelled to jump off it and run behind the sledge to thaw out the points of frozen thumbs and toes—frozen through socks of reindeer, felt, and wool inside deerskin boots.

The rough sea-ice of the trail gave place at times to willow scrub and low brush. Once they surprised a covey of snow-white ptarmigan; on another occasion they passed wolf-tracks in the snow. Slowly as the dogs went, it was impossible for Isobel Hutchison to aid them by running by their side, for the snow was heavy and deep. The last fifteen miles before Shingle Point were slow and painful. The way lay across the sea under a steep bluff, until at last they saw in the darkness the light of the lonely mission outpost at Shingle Point, shining like a star to guide them to warmth and comfort. That light was in Isobel Hutchison's mind when, some months later, an American reporter asked her if she believed in missions to the Eskimos!

Shingle Point Mission, declared Miss Hutchison, is as astonishing a spot to find on the brim of the Arctic Ocean as a gentleman in a silk hat! The further interpretation of such a description must be left to her own book *North to the Rime-ringed Sun*, together with all the other good stuff that must inevitably be left out of a story told in 5000 instead of nearly 200,000 words. It must just be added that, in spite of 50 or 60 degrees of frost, she went out botanizing, finding cassiope and carex under the snow on the hills, before she left by sledge for Aklavik itself, and after yet another journey, amazing to all those people who have never imagined that it might be even possible to sleep out in a tent in 62 degrees of frost, knew that she had at long last attained it when she saw before her, over the

entrance to a snow-wrapped yard, the magic words "Royal Canadian Mounted Police."

As Miss Hutchison confesses, "Those who search the maps of ten years ago for Aklavik will scarcely find it." Even more difficult is it to learn of its people, the strange life ordained by the Arctic, the scenery like a Norse fairy-tale, and the herd of reindeer which the Canadian Government had imported from Lapland for the Eskimos.

She left it all reluctantly, by an aeroplane guided by a famous pilot, following the course of the great Mackenzie river for three and a half days. At the end of that time she was "back in civilization" and able to catch a train for Edmonton.

She was on her way home, and home means something, even to a wanderer. "But," she confesses, "I had heard the call of the wild on star-lit nights under the Northern Lights; I had slept in a snow hut; I had broken a new trail at the foot of the splintered Endicotts—and my heart beat for the wilderness."

CHAPTER VI

TWELVE HUNDRED FEET DOWN

The Adventures of Gloria Hollister, who holds the Deep-sea Diving Record for Women

THERE are many ways of getting into touch with the great men of science. That adopted by Miss Gloria Hollister was perhaps the most original. While still a young student at Connecticut College for women she realized that if you wanted to meet the famous people who came to lecture the thing was to run the magic lantern. Then, if you were careful not to turn any of his slides upside down, the great man was sure to thank you at the end of the lecture, and you might even have a short but extremely interesting chat with him.

It was in this way that Miss Hollister became acquainted with Dr William Beebe, the scientist who has gained world-wide fame by descending to a depth of half a mile into the abyss of ocean in a steel globe called a bathysphere.[1]

But we are anticipating. Before we tell of Miss Hollister's adventures in the cause of science let us say something about herself. She is the daughter of a well-known New York doctor, but, although born and bred in that great city, her tastes from the beginning were for the open air and country life. She never had the least use for dolls or playthings of that sort, but from a very early age was intensely interested in live things. When no more than fourteen she was absorbed in the raising and breeding of chickens and turkeys. Her Black Orpingtons, Bronze Turkeys, and the rare Naked Necks, which she imported from British Guiana, have won

[1] The story of Dr Beebe's exploits is retold in *Epic Tales of Modern Adventure* (Harrap).

many prizes at the Madison Square and other leading poultry shows in the Eastern states. Indeed, her Black Orpingtons have more than once been selected to represent the United States at the World's Poultry Congress.

Other creatures she found equally attractive, and even snakes had no terrors for her. She would trap such dangerous reptiles as rattlesnakes and copperhead moccasins and bring them home, much to the horror of her family.

Another of her hobbies was swimming and diving. Through the family estate at Suffern, in New York State, ran the Mahwah river. Gloria, aged ten, was intensely keen to know what was at the bottom. She therefore procured a long glass tube, and, binding two friends of her own age to secrecy, made them tie a couple of large stones round her waist, then, with the tube in her mouth, sank to the bottom. Her idea was to breathe through the tube, but she was disgusted to find that, although she could breathe in air through the tube, she could not expel it. By the time she had realized this fact she was half drowned, and it was as well that the other little girls had the sense to pull her up again.

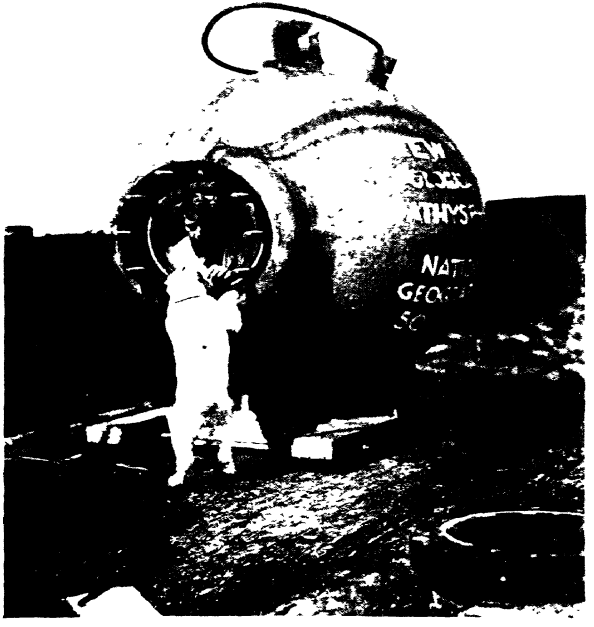
Quite undiscouraged, Gloria decided on a new form of diving-dress, which took the shape of a large oil-can fixed over her head. Again she had the stones tied to her, and down she went. This was splendid. She could breathe. The only trouble was that the air was soon exhausted, and once more it was a good thing that she was pulled up in time.

She went to school, and afterwards to Connecticut College, where she took up the serious study of zoology, in which she obtained high honours. It was there, as we have said, that she first met Dr William Beebe. She told him of her passionate interest in beasts and fishes, and he told her to come and see him when she left college, and he would endeavour to find a place for her on his staff. She presented herself in the summer of 1925, but



A SHALLOW-WATER DIVING-HELMET, USED BY GLORIA HOLLISTER

This apparatus is very different from one of Gloria Hollister's first diving-helmets—a large oil-can fixed over her head



GLORIA HOLLISTER IN THE 'BATHYSPHERE

there was nothing for her at the moment, so she went on to Columbia University, where she took her B.Sc. and M.A. degrees.

After that she paid a second visit to Dr Beebe, but once more she was disappointed. There was no post for her. But there was something else. A certain New York lady of the doctor's acquaintance, a Mrs Mitchell, was off on a jungle expedition to British Guiana. Gloria, he thought, might apply to lead the expedition. Gloria was just twenty, and what she did not know about leading a field expedition would have filled a large volume. Yet her qualifications as a naturalist were undeniable. She got the job, and presently she and Mrs Mitchell landed at Georgetown.

There was drought that year in British Guiana. In Georgetown there was a fine of twenty-five dollars for anyone who took a bath, so Mrs Mitchell and Gloria outfitted hastily and escaped into the jungle. At first they travelled through a smoke haze, for the forests were on fire, but later matters improved, and they secured many most interesting photographs and a number of even more interesting specimens, including twenty different live animals.

On the way back they stopped at Trinidad, where Gloria heard of the curious guacharo bird, found in the Arima Gorge in the interior of the island. The peculiarity of this bird is that the young are covered with fat, which can be boiled down and made into a butter which keeps indefinitely. Fired with the idea of taking one of these birds back to New York, Gloria visited the spot. She found a gorge with perpendicular sides about a hundred feet high, and no way down it except by water. She began by jumping from rock to rock, but presently came to a deep pool, where she was forced to swim. The pool swarmed with fresh-water crabs, which nipped her toes in a most unpleasant manner. After that she had to climb or slide down a couple of waterfalls, and on the edge of the second

she found a nest with a lively young half-feathered guacharo, a bird, she says "which no zoo in the world had ever had, and one which few white men had ever seen."

How she returned up the water-slides, carrying her guacharo, she has not related, but even that was not so difficult as finding food for her captive. She tried bread, biscuits, milk, and many different kinds of fruit, but the bird refused all these things. Then, as a last resort, she tried coconut, and found that he would eat it if she chewed it up first. "Coconut," says Gloria, "is the only fruit I detest in all its forms," but the bird's appetite was tremendous, and if not fed he made a noise like a child having very bad hiccups. Also he had a strong smell of cockroaches, so it may be well imagined that she was not sorry when New York was reached.

Reward was waiting. She was made a Fellow of the Geographical Society.

Then came a complete change of occupation. Gloria became an assistant in the laboratory of the celebrated Dr Alexis Carrel, of the Rockefeller Institute, helping him in his researches on cancer. This was no easy task, for it meant being in the laboratory every morning at eight o'clock, Sundays and holidays not necessarily excepted.

One spring morning in 1929 the telephone bell rang.

"Dr Beebe speaking. I am taking an expedition to Bermuda this summer, and there is a place for you, if you want it."

"Want it! When do we start?" was the instant reply.

Bermuda is one of the principal stations of the Department of Tropical Research of the New York Zoological Society. There the Society has a field laboratory, a launch, and two tugs. The group of islands known as the Bermudas forms the summit of a submarine mountain. The islands are surrounded by coral reefs, among which is a wealth of sea-life of all descriptions. Round the islands the

ocean sinks to abysmal depths. The water, intensely clear, is illuminated by the blaze of semi-tropical sunshine to great depths.

Here Gloria Hollister quickly realized the value of her youthful training in swimming and diving, and presently, wearing a diving-helmet and bathing-dress, was walking on the sandy bottom at depths from twenty to forty feet, studying fish life at first hand. On these submarine excursions she found herself surrounded by a wealth of beauty which not the most lovely of land gardens or the richest of tropical forests can rival. She learned that it was possible—indeed, simple—to sit on a coral crag thirty feet down and convey these beauties to canvas which has previously been soaked in linseed oil and dried again. Of course, special paints are used.

Once she encountered a shark, but found it a cowardly creature, and lost all fear of them. Dr Beebe has a theory that sharks will attack a human being only on the surface.

There was plenty of work, hard and constant work, but in this Gloria revelled. While she greatly enjoys change and adventure it is the scientific side of life which appeals to her most strongly, and she has herself done much original work. One of her achievements has been the perfection of an old German formula by which the body of a fish is made transparent and the skeleton stained bright red. In the laboratory at the National Park are no fewer than 3000 specimens of fish which she herself has prepared in this way, and which are the materials for an intensive study of the skeletal systems of fish.

Gloria's under-sea work off Bermuda was not without some exciting incidents. Twice, while she was below, the anchors slipped and unexpected currents carried away the boat above. The descent from the boat is made by a rope-ladder, and the diver also comes up by the ladder. On the first of these occasions she found that her ladder had

disappeared. She signalled by her air-hose, but got no reply. There was nothing for it but to climb up the air-hose.

"I didn't know," she says, "whether it would work, but it did, and when I reached the surface I found the crew of the boat too busy trying to keep it from bumping into Gurnet's Rock to pay any attention to my signals."

On the second occasion she saw the ladder disappearing and started to chase it. She reached it just as it was being dragged over a rugged under-water ledge, and thankfully grasped it. Had she been a moment later the consequences might have been very serious, for these coral rocks have edges sharp as knives. "In point of fact," she adds, "we never had any serious diving accident."

In the meantime Dr Beebe was preparing for a first-hand study of deep-sea life, and for this purpose he and Mr Otis Barton had constructed a steel globe fitted with windows of fused quartz, in which Dr Beebe hoped to descend to depths hitherto unplumbed by man and watch living deep-sea fishes which, up to that date, had only been seen dead and mangled by being drawn to the surface from the depths. It should be explained that the difference in pressure bursts the swim-bladders of deep-sea fish as they are lifted in trawl-nets, so that they arrive at the surface in a very broken condition.

The globe, which Dr Beebe named a bathysphere, weighed more than two tons, was let down by a very strong steel wire cable, and was supplied with electric light and telephone. It was Gloria's duty to act as receiver of messages during all descents, receiving instructions, recording observations, and at the same time warning those below of weather changes. The work was hard, for Dr Beebe talked rapidly when within sight of, perhaps, a dozen strange denizens of the deep at the same moment.

On one occasion she and the other members of the crew of the barge from which the sphere was being lowered had

a bad fright. Dr Beebe's voice was suddenly cut off, and the natural fear was that some damage had occurred to the sphere. If a leak had started sea-water would have squirted in with the force of steel bullets and instantly destroyed the occupants. The bathysphere was hauled up with all possible speed, and the anxious watchers were extremely relieved to find that the silence had been caused merely by a fault in the telephone cable.

On July 11, 1930, a descent was in progress, and Gloria was as usual glued to the 'phone, when it suddenly occurred to her that it was her birthday. On this day Dr Beebe and Mr Barton had reached a record depth of 1426 feet, and in the excitement his assistant had forgotten all about the occasion. Not so Dr Beebe. From a depth of a quarter of a mile below the blue waters his voice came up.

"Gloria, I have a birthday present for you."

It was, she says, the strangest but most desirable of all birthday presents, an opportunity to go down herself and see the miracles of the great depths. So she and Mr Tee Van, who was in charge of the deck of the barge, were lowered to a depth of 410 feet.

"At this depth," Gloria has written,

> the pressure on the sphere was 197 pounds to the square inch. Looking directly out, blue seemed the dominant tone, but, peering downward, we stared into an infinite depth of dazzling blue-purple. This was an *awful* colour, which excited not only an indescribable force in holding our attention, but a strong desire to descend deeper and deeper "down to the dark, the utter dark, where the blind white sea snakes are." We asked the Director to lower us another hundred, but his reply was decisive, and presently the sphere started to ascend.

Later, however, Gloria had her desire, and in August 1931 was lowered to a depth of 1208 feet, which is a world's deep-sea diving record for women.

It must not be supposed that Gloria Hollister gives up

her whole life to that stern mistress science. Far from it. She is fond of all out-door sports, especially riding. She is keen on camping, and was the founder of the girls' Scout troop at her home at Suffern. As she says herself, she loves life, people, and adventure, and never knows a moment of boredom.

She is a Fellow of the Society of Woman Geographers, a member of the Council of the American Woman's Association, and a Research Associate of the New York Zoological Society, and merely still a young woman!

CHAPTER VII

MUD, MULES, AND MOSQUITOES

The Lonely Journey of Mrs Cressy-Marcks across Wildest America

"WE are sinking!" The despairing cries arose in Arabic, French, Japanese, and Portuguese from the mixed bag of passengers aboard the launch *Civica*, in which craft the heroine of this particular adventure, Mrs Violet Cressy-Marcks, was travelling up the river Amazon on her way across the South American continent.

Mrs Cressy-Marcks has travelled in many lands, both arctic and tropical, but this was the first time she had attempted such a task as penetrating the Amazon almost to its source, and then crossing the lofty chain of the Andes by almost unknown mule-tracks. No inhabited country is so little known as the upper reaches of the Amazon and the eastern slope of the Andes. So far as Manaos the journey may be made in comfort in large steamers, but Mrs Cressy-Marcks, intent upon getting a thorough knowledge of the great river and its inhabitants, preferred to travel in small craft.

It may sound a trifling matter to be wrecked on a river. Be assured that it is nothing of the sort when the river is the mighty Amazon, wide as an inland sea and bounded on either side by impenetrable forest.

The *Civica* ran aground in a thick mist at about ten o'clock on a sultry morning, and in spite of every effort could not be got off. Instead she began to sink rapidly. Wood and all sorts of odds and ends were thrown over the bow to make some sort of landing-ground. Three Japanese passengers jumped and struggled to the bank; Mrs Cressy-Marcks collected cameras, suitcases, food, and drink and

flung them ashore; the rest of the passengers and crew were landed; and just as the brown river-water flowed over the deck Mrs Cressy-Marcks sprang ashore.

The jungle was like a quickset hedge, and even more thorny. The eight men and one woman had to hack at the brush to obtain even standing-room. Clouds of poisonous insects settled on the dripping castaways and tortured them. Luckily a canoe passed, and they hailed it and sent a message to Para for help, but they had to endure seven hours of misery before a launch arrived and took them back to Para.

Not an auspicious start to a journey clear across the South American continent, but to Mrs Cressy-Marcks accidents of this kind are all in the day's work, and presently she was aboard another larger launch travelling westward.

The new launch had other passengers besides the human variety, and the temperature in the cabin varied between 110 and 127 degrees Fahrenheit. The marvel is that an Englishwoman could keep her health under such conditions, but Mrs Cressy-Marcks has her own rules for keeping fit, gained from wide experience in all parts of the world.

"I eat well," she says, "and always the best food I can get. I never drink alcohol until the sun goes down, and then little, go to bed early, get up early, and bathe in any way the local custom demands—but I bathe! I wear as little as possible in the heat, and eat native dishes." By this *régime* she has managed to live and keep well in temperatures varying between 127 degrees of heat and 100 degrees of frost.

The launch reached Boa Vista, the Ford concession. Here the company have 4,000,000 acres and 2500 men. It was strange to find electric light, electric irons, fans, electric refrigerators, motor-cars, lorries, all the appurtenances of civilization, in the heart of the swamp forest.

It would be extremely interesting to describe the adventures of Mrs Cressy-Marcks on her long journey by steamer,

launch, and canoe up to a remote place called Atalaya, but we have not space to do so. The story can be read in her book *Up the Amazon and over the Andes*.[1] It is with her struggle to cross the gigantic mountain-chain of the Andes that this chapter has mainly to deal.

Atalaya is a very beautiful place, with a soil so rich that it will grow almost anything; but owing to the scarcity of labour little is grown, and there is hardly enough food for the inhabitants. The people live mainly on rice, bananas, and yuca, which is made from cassava. Eggs and meat are most difficult to obtain. Mrs Cressy-Marcks had brought with her a certain amount of food for her mountain journey, but had to buy coffee and other stores at Atalaya. There being no coffee-mill in the place, she had to pound the beans in a mortar with a pestle and grind them between two stones.

From Atalaya Mrs Cressy-Marcks went on by canoe up the river Tamba towards a place called Ocopa. A Czecho-slovakian named Antonio Vlhesek begged to accompany her, and she allowed him to do so. He was a fine, big man of six feet three inches, but curiously silent.

The weather in this part of the world runs to extremes, and the party, consisting of three canoes with Indian paddlers, had hardly started before the rain began. It was a blinding, pitiless downpour, which lasted for eight hours. During the whole day the canoes had to be forced against a strong current. Sometimes poles could be used; more often the Indians had to go overboard and push or pull. The party were thankful to reach Casa Blanca, where there was an Indian hut, in which they were able to light a fire, cook a meal, and get into dry clothes. Mrs Cressy-Marcks slept in a hammock on the veranda, and awoke very early, drenched with dew.

The next day was August 26, 1930, a day which Mrs

[1] Hodder and Stoughton.

Cressy-Marcks is not likely to forget. After a breakfast of rice, beans, yuca, and coffee they left, the Indian family waving farewell. That day there was no rain; instead a pitiless, blazing sun. The heat was terrible, and soon it became clear that Vlhesek was ill. He said that it was fever, and that he had it on two days out of four. He became delirious and talked constantly. For an hour Mrs Cressy-Marcks fanned him, then, feeling very sick herself, lay down in the bottom of the canoe. Hour after hour the canoe pushed on, the heat growing even more intense.

Suddenly Vlhesek got up and went into the bow. He lit a cigarette, but could not smoke it: he was still delirious. He took out his money and handed it to Mrs Cressy-Marcks. Then he began to shave. He shaved very carefully, but waited a long time before he washed off the lather. Then he brushed his teeth and combed his hair. Mrs Cressy-Marcks was very troubled. She looked round for the other canoes, but they were not in sight. By this time the sun was down, and, since there is little twilight in these latitudes, it was rapidly growing dark. There was as yet no sign of any place where a camp could be made. Vlhesek turned and caught the Englishwoman's wrists. She was a little afraid, for he was evidently quite mad. But he dropped them and went back to the bow. More anxious than ever, Mrs Cressy-Marcks again looked back for sight of the other boats, and while her head was turned there came the heavy crash of a revolver. She turned to see Vlhesek falling into the water. He had blown out his brains.

The Indians were terrified. Mrs Cressy-Marcks managed to get the body ashore, the other canoes came up, and it was decided to return at once to Atalaya, where the poor man's body was buried. Then again Mrs Cressy-Marcks set out with two canoes. The torrent appeared to be stronger than ever. The river, she says, "seemed to rush like a frightened multitude of water past the canoe's side." She had to stand

and hold the cameras, for everything in the bottom of the canoe was soaked by the waves breaking over the sides. At times, so fierce was the rush, one of the Indians had to spring out with a rope and wind it round a projecting rock in order to get a breathing-space. If, in such a place, command of a canoe had been lost for even a moment the light craft must have been wrecked.

There were other troubles besides heat and mosquitoes. A tiny black-and-white fly called *monte blanca* bit terribly. Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to wear a mask over her face. Even then the wretched insects crawled up her sleeves and bit through her clothes. One night, when they were camping on a *playa* (sand beach), the darkness was suddenly illuminated by a giant meteor, brilliant as a sun. On the next day there was a tremendous thunderstorm, the peals echoing and roaring among the mountains bordering the stream. When storms broke the cameras were the great anxiety. Above all things they had to be kept dry.

Food had to be husbanded preciously. One evening a wild hen was seen and killed, and for once there was meat for supper. The scenery was heavenly, but the insects made life resemble a very different sphere. And then one night, sleeping on the ground under her mosquito-net, Mrs Cressy-Marcks was awakened by the feeling of something being pulled over her. She looked down and saw a snake. Her first impulse was to draw her revolver from under her pillow and shoot it. Then it occurred to her how nervous the Indians were, and that a shot might cause them to bolt. She had handled snakes, and decided that she could grab it by the neck.

She tried, but the brute struck, and its fangs drove into her leg just below the knee. With admirable presence of mind she grasped the reptile and, holding it, walked some distance to a rock, where she smashed its head. Then she went back and, getting her medicine-chest, took a scalpel,

cut open the bite, and put in two halves of a tablet of permanganate of potash. The brute's flat head had proved it to be poisonous, but she did not know how poisonous it might be.

She found herself struggling against panic—and small wonder! She pulled out a mirror—she had not used one for weeks—and examined her face, to see if she was going black or grey, or if her lips were changing colour. Except that her face was thinner than ever before, there did not seem to be much wrong. She decided on a cup of strong coffee, a walk, and then sleep. She consoled herself by thinking that if she had to die this was as good a place as any in which to leave this life. She carried out her programme, and though her leg was extremely painful was up and about early on the next morning. That day they reached Ocopa. There a woman gave her a glass of milk, and it seemed a most precious gift.

At Ocopa lived an American named Skinner. He was seventy-seven years of age, and had a Peruvian wife. He had a two-roomed hut, and gave his visitor tea, which was a very great treat. He also gave her rice, two eggs, and a pancake—food for the gods after days of starvation! Mrs Cressy-Marcks bathed, washed her clothes, and, despite the pain of her bitten leg, felt happier. Skinner kept chickens, and that night a tiger (jaguar) attacked them. His wife, however, went out with no weapon but a stick and drove off the marauder!

Ocopa was the head of navigation. From this point Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to find her way afoot across the Andes. To cross the Andes is not merely a matter of climbing up one side of a mountain and descending the other. This lofty chain, which is a part of the backbone of the American continent, is, rather, a gigantic tableland, which in many places is as wide as the whole of Ireland. The passes which cross it are often higher than the summit of Mont Blanc,

and there are no roads. In the district which Mrs Cressy-Marcks set out to climb there was only a trail, which was often cut by deep, swift streams and blocked by fallen trees. To make matters still more difficult, it is one of the wettest parts of the world. Rain falls on almost every day all the year round, and the trail is mostly a sea of mud.

Another difficulty is to obtain transport of any kind. In Africa you can always get natives to carry your goods, but the Indians of South America do not take kindly to this sort of work. Mules are used to carry burdens, but they are very scarce and difficult to find or hire.

As it happened, Skinner was just starting for a hut of his at Pacchari, two days' march up in the hills, and Mrs Cressy-Marcks decided to go with him, trusting that at Satipo, the next settlement, she might be able to hire mules. He was to start at three in the morning, and would take the traveller's goods on the back of one of his mules.

Mrs Cressy-Marcks had fever: her temperature rose to 103 degrees. In addition, her leg was still very painful, and she knew that she was not fit to travel, yet if she failed to start she might have to wait weeks—even months—for mules. At eight in the morning she left on foot, following the trail of the mules, for a place called Shankey, nineteen miles away. She had not gone a quarter of a mile before she was in thick forest, with no sight of sun or sky. She climbed over rocks and dropped down steep places, only to find fresh boulders barring the way. The path was so confused that it was most difficult to find, and as the sun rose higher everything steamed.

At last she overtook the mules, seven of them, and wondered how they had ever managed to get as far as they had gone. Yet the next stage was worse than the first. They came to a slope so steep that the mules slipped and fell one on another. Packs were torn off and tumbled into the thickets and over precipices. Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to

drag her pack out of thorny bushes and reload her beast. The girth was so tight that she was obliged to use nails, teeth, and knife to undo it. It was four hours before order was restored. By this time she was shaking with ague, and could hardly walk. She pushed on ahead, and came to a hut, in which an Indian woman was cooking rice, where she dropped exhausted. The Indian woman was kind, and fetched her water and rice, which gave her sufficient strength to push on again.

It began to rain; it poured. Every step was a misery, and sometimes the traveller went into mud and water up to her waist. She had to leave the trail and climb precipices, pulling herself up by roots and branches. Over and over again she fell. The scenery was grand. Indeed, it was beyond grandeur, for it was awe-inspiring. But twilight fell, and there was still no sign of a dwelling, so that all sorts of frightening possibilities coursed through the brain of the tired traveller. She was not only worn out, but ill. A night in the open might mean the end.

Suddenly she saw a hut. It was empty, but it was shelter, and in it she found a number of small bananas. She ate them, and sat while the rain dripped through the leaky roof. Her throat was sore, every bone ached. This place could not be Shankey. She decided to go on. It meant a desperate climb over rocks, wading waist-deep through a rushing brook, but at last she saw a fence, a clearing, a banana-grove, and a hut. An old Indian was in the hut.

"Shankey?" whispered the traveller.

The old man nodded.

There was nothing to eat but bananas, and it was hours before Skinner arrived with the mules. The packs were brought in, and hot coffee made. Attired in a one-piece garment lent to her by the Indian, Mrs Cressy-Marcks hung her own soaked things by the fire and tried to sleep. At this height the nights were comparatively cool, and she

shivered miserably. Skinner roused her before dawn, to the most tragi-comic disaster of all. When she looked for her clothes they were there no longer. A gust of wind had blown the flames from the fire out upon them and burned them. There remained the waistband of her slacks and the two arms of her bush shirt. All she had to wear was a silk washing frock, for her other clothes had been left at Ocopa. Think of clambering through a rain-drenched forest in a silk washing frock with bare arms and bare legs!

It seems incredible that things could grow worse, yet they did. They came to a ledge running along the side of a mountain, so narrow that, as Mrs Cressy-Marcks says, "I could get round only by digging my toes in hard." Then came a gap. She jumped it, and turned to see what the mules would do. The first came along gingerly. Then the poor beast missed its footing, toppled over, and crashed into the torrent below. The amazing thing is that it was not killed. The unfortunate animal was dragged up alive, and was actually able to go on. Another mule slipped down into the creek. It carried Mrs Cressy-Marcks's goods, and she herself had to unload it and get it up. It took four and a half hours before the tangle was cleared and they were able to proceed. Utterly exhausted, barely able to put one foot before the other, Mrs Cressy-Marcks reached Skinner's small clearing at Pacchari, where, too weary even to eat, she slung her hammock, fell into it, and slept.

The next day was one of physical rest, but mental anxiety. Skinner could not let her have a mule, and this place was still some distance from Satipo. Skinner's only suggestion was that she might find an Indian to show her the way there. She did find an Indian, and left with him at six on the next morning. The trail was as bad as ever, but after some hours of struggle the two reached a place called Areatique, where there was an Indian who had mules and was willing to hire them out. The first essential was to get the

baggage from Ocopa. One cannot live for ever in a silk washing frock.

The bargain made, Mrs Cressy-Marcks and the Indian went on and reached a hut where lived a young man named Fernandez, whose brother Mrs Cressy-Marcks had already met. He at once cooked a meal, and eggs and coffee tasted delicious. He begged his English guest to stay, and when she said that she must push on at once proposed marriage. "I have had quite a number of quick proposals," says our heroine, "but I think this comes first for speed." Poor Fernandez! He was very sad, and very unwillingly said farewell when the lady told him that she had parents and friends in England and must go home.

The road became, if possible, worse than ever. In places they had to climb trees and swing from branch to branch to escape being engulfed in fathomless mud-holes. At last they came to a place where lived a Czech named Murrea, who had a beautiful Peruvian wife and a charmingly pretty little daughter of five. He kept chickens, and hospitably gave Mrs Cressy-Marcks an attic in which to sleep, where she slung her hammock between two rafters. Satipo, he told her, was quite near.

At six o'clock she was again on the road. She had to wade the Rio Negro, but after that the going was better, though the trail was not easy to follow. At last she and her guide reached a clearing, with a hut and a sluice-box of the kind seen in Alaskan gold-diggings. There was no one there, but after a while a French-Canadian named Mateo turned up, a pleasant little man who offered her a meal. But Mrs Cressy-Marcks wanted to be sure of a bed, and pushed on to Satipo.

She found a settlement 'on the dole.' The Government, anxious to settle up this rich and beautiful montaña region, had given transport money and food in order to bring settlers. The settlers were there, but they were idle. The

rich land was still uncleared, and now that the dole had ceased, owing to trouble in the capital, the people were actually short of food. It was a pitiful place, where Mrs Cressy-Marcks could not even buy a pair of stockings, which she badly needed, for one leg had been cut by a tree-root, and on the other was a nasty wound from the snake-bite.

She found lodging with a Señor Luis Vlasquez and his wife. They led a primitive existence. Thick brush separated the huts, and all water had to be fetched from the river. Her luggage had not yet arrived, so she washed her one frock in the river, bathed herself, and wandered about the colony. There was plenty of food for those who cared to cultivate the land, the soil was fertile, the scenery exquisite, but most of the people were hopelessly lazy. At last her baggage arrived, and its owner delighted Señora Vlasquez by giving her three dresses. Other things, old, stained, even scorched, were greedily appreciated by women who had not seen a new garment for years.

A man named Sanchez had mules. Eight were engaged at once, and after the packs had been made up the traveller was able to get three hours' sleep before starting. First they had to cross the river on a raft. The road—it was nothing but a trail—was as bad as that already experienced. It rained all day. At night they reached a farm belonging to a German named Hilsen, who had been there nearly forty years and never expected to leave. He could not, he said, face the journey over the Andes. The kind old man apologized for being able to offer his guest no more than a plate of rice and some coffee.

The trials of the journey had not helped Mrs Cressy-Marcks. Her bitten leg was swollen and painful, and the wound was septic. She bandaged it, using *kashasa*, the native spirit, as a disinfectant, and decided that on the next day she would ride a mule. Sanchez said that it was

impossible: no mule could be spared. That was a dreadful day. Hour after hour through sodden forests, wading through mud sometimes three feet deep, with the rain streaming down! The one welcome break was a meal at the house of a kindly Czech.

She was now high among the mountains and beginning to pant in the rarefied air. Snow peaks loomed through the downpour. Mountain torrents had constantly to be crossed. Some were spanned by single poles, across which the Indian guides strolled jauntily, but over which Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to crawl painfully inch by inch. The night was spent in a miserable hut full of Indians. It was bitterly cold, and an icy wind shrieked down from the heights. There was no room to swing a hammock, and Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to sleep on a heap of corn on the floor. She was awakened by sharp pain, and found rats gnawing at her feet.

In the morning she was really ill, with a leg swollen and festered. Yet it was impossible to remain. Again the day was wet and cold, the trail exceedingly hilly, and every step a misery. The altitude was 14,000 feet, each breath an effort. Sanchez was drunk; the boy who was his assistant chewed coca-leaves all day, and was stupid with the drug. Even at this height the bush was thick and there were big trees. As a sort of finishing touch one came crashing down across the path, and every one of the eight mules had to be unloaded before it could be led round the obstacle. The delay cost hours.

They came to a bridge over a torrent. It seemed to be rotten, and the mules were led over one at a time. One went through, rolled over, and fell into the river below. But a mule has more lives than a cat: it was fetched out alive and still able to travel. That night there was no hut—nothing but a cave in which to shelter. The men were drunk and sullen, and refused to get wood to make a fire, so that Mrs Cressy-Marcks had to do it herself. She cooked

Quaker Oats and opened her last tin of cheese. She slept on a pile of wet sacks, and awoke with every bone and muscle one aching agony. With a mighty endeavour she crawled a few yards, only to be violently sick.

Somehow she forced herself to light a fire and make coffee. She gave the men, who had done nothing so far but drink spirit and chew coca-leaves, some coffee and biscuits. They gazed at her in amazement. The idea of some one's doing something for somebody else for nothing was beyond their comprehension.

A little revived, Mrs Cressy-Marcks started again, climbing for four hours in the rain and the freezing cold, until she fell. The men went stolidly on. She pulled herself up and staggered on, only to fall again. When she rose a second time the mules were out of sight. She was now so dizzy that the marvel is that she kept the trail. It must have been largely through the instinct gained from years of walking in wild countries. She knew that in a very short time she would fall again, and this time there would be no getting up.

Then—these things happen in real life as well as in fiction—suddenly two men on mules were beside her—not heartless savages, but white men. One was a German, manager of a Government farm, the other a Peruvian, a road engineer. To the first, the German, Mrs Cressy-Marcks had a letter of introduction.

"Who are you? What are you doing?" he asked in amazement, and when the exhausted traveller vaguely replied that she had come from Brazil the two hardly believed her.

"*Caramba!* How awful! Good heavens!" they kept on exclaiming. They did more than exclaim. They put her on a mule and told her that they would take her to Runnatullo. The mules were good, and she found herself on an excellent track; yet the journey was a very long one, and the track in places like a precipice. The rain turned to sleet, and the

cold was more bitter than ever. Gigantic peaks rose all round, waterfalls thundered down their sides, and the clouds came lower and lower, until the travellers were wrapped in icy mist. Numbed with cold, Mrs Cressy-Marcks got off her mule to try to walk and get back her circulation, but the effort at 16,000 feet, in her condition, was too great, and she fell, blood trickling from her nose and ears.

Three hours to go, her new friends told her. It was snowing now, yet even at this height there were bushes with great mauve-coloured flowers and other beautiful green things. They came to a valley and a house with brick walls, an iron roof, and an earth floor covered with straw. There was little comfort inside, but she obtained some milk, which revived her. She got out of her dripping clothes and sat by a fire in a wet raincoat, while a bed was made for her of sacks in an inner room. But the sacks were soaking wet, and so was the straw. It was impossible to sleep, and she spent the night shivering and gasping for breath.

Few women could have faced a fresh day's travel after such an ordeal, but they told her that an Indian would take her to the Government farm, where she would find comforts, food, and proper bedding. So early on the next morning she left in a blinding snowstorm. She and her guide rode along a made road; they passed a lake lying nearly 17,000 feet above sea-level, its edges white with drifted snow. The cold bit cruelly into a body so long accustomed to the sweltering heat of the Amazon. Yet even here was cultivation, for the mountain-sides were terraced, and crops were planted out on them.

At last the farm, where Karl Keller, the under-manager, welcomed the worn-out traveller, and gave her not only a meal of coffee, with hot milk, waffles, and fried eggs, but a bedroom with a real bed. "I looked at it," says Mrs Cressy-Marcks, "as a knight might have looked at the Holy Grail." It seemed the finest in the world. It was soft

and springy, with a pillow and warm blankets. So intensely did the wanderer enjoy this bed that she did not want to go to sleep until she had fully savoured its luxury. The fact that to-morrow cold and snow would have to be faced again made no difference. For one night she rested warm and comfortable.

That next day the crest of the great range was crossed, and the road dropped into warmth. There were hedges of geraniums and blackberries, lovely flowers. There was still a hard road to be faced, difficulties and even fresh hardships, but now the worst was over, and two days later she was aboard a big lorry, being carried along a good road to Ocopa. Curious that she should reach another place with the same name as that wretched settlement from which she had started, but this Ocopa had an hotel, a real hotel with tables, chairs, a waiter, and proper food—even meat. There we must leave her, for after that she was able to reach her journey's end by motor and train.

Few women could have survived such an ordeal as she had passed through, but Mrs Cressy-Marcks possesses strength and stamina beyond the ordinary. Moreover she has travelled in every country of the world, and through every variation of climate, from the cruel winter of the Arctic Circle to the very different, but equally trying, tropical conditions of the Amazon belt. For the most part her journeys have been made for purposes of scientific research. She has carried out archæological studies among the ruins of ancient civilizations; she has organized and led expeditions from Cairo to the Cape, from Lapland to Baluchistan. Experience gained thus is an asset even more valuable than physical strength.

CHAPTER VIII

PROSPECTING IN THE WILDS FOR A LIVING

How Kathleen Rice abandoned the Teaching of Mathematics for Mining

TAKE the opening years of a new and exciting century, a 'sweet girl graduate,' as they were called in those days, endowed with what is generally considered to be a rarity in the feminine sex, a brain so admirably tuned for mathematics that it won for her the much-prized Edward Blake Scholarship at Toronto University—and what do you imagine would be the ultimate sum of all this? Certainly not its actual result—a woman trapper and prospector, living on an island in a large lake hundreds, thousands, of miles distant from what is popularly called civilization.

Trapping, prospecting, training huskies—in those few words is depicted the existence of Miss Kathleen Rice in 1935, such an existence as has been the ambition of almost every man during at least one period of his childhood, boyhood, or youth. So unheard of as a career for girls, however, was it that they did not live it even in their imaginations, but contented themselves with a very second-hand sort of enjoyment. Now one of them has become not only a pioneer, but a successful pioneer. What is more interesting is that she traps and prospects, not as more and more people are doing in these days, by the help of the aeroplane, but as they did in the old days—by canoe, by dog-team, or on foot.

Miss Rice's nearest neighbour lives eight miles away, where there is a small store and post-office. There have

been times, however, when to reach her by letter you had to address the envelope to the nearest town, one hundred miles south of her location—a town with a history, by the way, intertwined with the first French settlers in the region. They called it Lepas: its original name has been firmly but amusingly half anglicized to *The* Pas. It lies on the great Saskatchewan river. Herb Lake, where she at present lives, tremendous as it would appear if shifted on to a small island the size of Great Britain, you will probably not find at all on the map, unless the atlas you use is a very big, very detailed, very expensive, one. For it lies in that vast, almost unknown district, north of the great Lake Winnipeg, which is riddled with great sheets and rivers of water. The year 1915 was the beginning of a new era in this region, for it saw the coming of a railway whose construction, over four hundred miles of ice and tundra, was a romance in itself. Once in every two weeks a train rushes along the rails, towards the port of Churchill, on Hudson Bay. The aeroplane, however, is the real magic carpet of that frozen north. It can ignore, and has put to naught, difficulties of travel which in the last century would have seemed insurmountable; it has opened up territory otherwise inaccessible.

I have seen a photograph of Miss Rice as she was when she graduated from Toronto University in 1906. An eager, expectant face, it showed, framed in fair hair, with a direct and level gaze. But it found that life has rebuffs, as well as prizes, to offer. Unjust rebuffs, too, as many a brilliant woman both before her and after her has discovered. After leaving the university she pined for the freer west of Canada, and took up an appointment there; but to be a woman, it appeared, was in itself a handicap, in spite of the oft-quoted twentieth-century 'emancipation' of her sex. In the academic world merit was not only matched against merit: the scales were weighted for other reasons.

Not a new story in itself, but new at some time to each fresh victim. Some have given up their lives to fighting it; others have surrendered to it passively. Kathleen Rice took a course more unusual than either: greatly by inclination, but perhaps with a little bitterness, she turned her life in a completely different direction.

Now it happened that she had spent one of her vacations climbing in the Rocky Mountains. She had done sufficiently well to earn her membership in the Canadian Alpine Club. It was a recreation and a hobby for which she had proved naturally gifted in a physical way, a rarer taste in women even than a predilection for mathematics. Her thoughts now turned to this outlet. Could she use it for any other purpose? It was then that she considered the possibilities of prospecting.

Prospecting is a livelihood that is much favoured by writers of the more adventurous type of fiction, and quite rightly, for there are few careers to match its almost necessary accompaniments of journeys into the unknown, with all the suspense, thrills, and sensations inevitably provided. But there is another side of prospecting which is truer. Viewed as a serious occupation, it needs scientific knowledge. That is, however, the easiest thing for the intelligent novice to master. More difficult are the qualities of endurance, independence, and carelessness not only for the conventions, but for all the comforts of civilized life.

In short, the last job in the world for an educated woman!

Kathleen Rice, however, considered it carefully, and decided to try it. She was living in a country whose mineral deposits were for the most part as yet unexploited, although, in the eastern part, known to be rich and plentiful, if sometimes extremely difficult to work. It was probable that the wild days of the great gold-rushes had gone for ever. She determined to look farther afield for humbler stuff; there

was in the east nickel (90 per cent. in the world was to be found there); there were asbestos, chromium, cobalt. And there was an alluring possibility that some or all of these and more might be found in the untouched north. In that new land she would search.

Logically, reasonably, as her whole training had taught her, she studied during the winters in camp to equip herself suitably for such a future. She wanted to be an efficient, a first-class, prospector, not merely an amateur, a dabbler. She wanted to study the science of the earth, of its rock and river formations, its vegetation, soils, outcrops, colours, shapes. Every one of these outward expressions was the interpreter, she knew, of that for which she would search.

For the most part the practical application of such knowledge lay up north in a strange world. The Indians and primitive man might have roamed over it in times gone by. Few white men had explored its wild places; almost no white woman.

Upon securing a grubstake from an old college friend she made a trip north, with the help of Indians. They taught her many of their secrets—this strange white, fair girl, whom they named Mooniasquao.[1] They taught her the lore of the wild, the meaning of the turn of a branch, the rustle of a leaf, the tint of moss, the bend of a trail—a thousand tiny things that meant life or death a hundred times a day.

In 1918 she made her first trip without the company of any other human being. It was March; the world lay under ice and snow. At such a season of the year the temperature in these latitudes varies from 20 to 30 degrees below zero. In places the snow might lie twenty feet deep, so that the walker in snowshoes trod level with the topmost branches of tall trees. The stillness is something that could never be imagined by an ordinary townsman, so intense and so

[1] *Moonias* = 'Tenderfoot'; *asquao* = 'woman.'

palpable that you feel that if you put out your hand you could touch it.

In such a world the only method of travelling far is by dog-sleigh, and Miss Rice almost always goes far. And so she had her dog-team of huskies, heavy enough to pull a considerable burden, but not so heavy as to sink through the snow, snow sometimes frozen as hard as a block of ice by a 60-mile-an-hour wind from the bare wastes of the Arctic regions.

She reached her old camp safely, spent the spring and summer prospecting, and returned to civilization in safety by canoe and river-steamer, one hundred miles each way as the crow flies. Only the foolish embark on such expeditions without knowledge and experience and a fair certainty of success. But, however sure, one's first expedition in such circumstances is a severe trial of nerve, all the same, and never to be forgotten.

On such a run a tremendous part depends on the dogs. Sometimes the trail, usually beaten sufficiently hard to be discerned, may have been buried under drifts of snow blown by the wind or a new fall of a foot or more deep. To find it then and to keep along it a dog must use his 'instinct,' or, more truly, his dog-knowledge and dog-senses. The leader will thrust his nose into the drift until he encounters some familiar scent, or circle round until his paws tell him of the hard path beneath, and he is safely on the trail, no matter how winding and angular it is.

Traffic in summer in that northerly region is chiefly by the river; in winter too by river is often the easiest method of travelling, although in certain places, where the current may be unusually swift or the temperature inclined to vary, it is never frozen over twice in the same way, and is generally avoided by those people who prefer safety to death by drowning, or at the best a drenching in ice-cold water. Sometimes the river route, however, is inevitable, and Miss

Rice is fond of quoting her present dog-leader, Trilby, as an example of dog sagacity:

> She gives one an almost exaggerated idea of the dangers of that river route, so painstaking is she to avoid even the slightest risk to the outfit. On one occasion this winter, during an intensely cold spell of weather, some dog-team went up this river, taking short cuts across several stretches of the temporary ice that had formed over the swifter water. At first Trilby hit out delightedly, following their track. But after cutting across the first bend she began to have her misgivings, so that, coming to the next stretch of this thin ice, she deliberately chose to avoid it and turned off into the short portage that has been cut there, although it had not been broken before all winter, and was a welter of deep snow-drifts. The conviction that her sagacity about such a matter was superior to mine alone inspired her course, for I had not given her a hint of what to do. Of course, when she so unexpectedly swung into the safer way I called out delighted words of praise to her, and she was the proud, happy leader as she went plunging along between the trees.

The most dangerous time, however, to travel by river is during the spring, when the ice is melting—in a normally warm season from the latter part of April to the middle of May. A quick thaw will often cause an ice-jam in a narrow part of the river—a jam that will build up a dangerous dam of colossal bricks of ice, two feet thick, which will block the swiftly flowing course and perhaps flood fifty square miles of country in a day. In the autumn too the first ice formed often boils up again, and is carried into the rivers.

The great risk that the traveller by canoe runs at this time is not from flood, but from the eccentric course that these great floating 'bergs' may take. The experienced, therefore, severely ignore the river as a means of transport until the ice is melted or frozen hard. On one occasion, however, in the autumn it was necessary for Miss Rice to

reach The Pas quickly. The ice had broken, but on a journey of a hundred miles no one could guarantee the state of the rivers.

She decided to chance it. For some miles she paddled along in *The Duckling*, her little 12-foot canoe, weighing only 40 lb., so that she can carry it on her shoulders when necessary, until she reached a narrow neck of the river. There the ice-blocks were numerous, moving astonishingly fast in the swirling, headlong water. But she was caught irrevocably: she could neither go back nor reach the banks of the river through the ice that ran swiftly along the margin. Her one chance of getting through alive was to manœuvre the small canoe among the ice-blocks, warding them off with the paddle, lest they crush it. For some five or ten miles she did this, winning to open water at last, though, she confesses, somewhat exhausted at the end. But she was alive—a fact which most people who knew the circumstances would have found extremely surprising.

Such an adventure was none of her own seeking; she is only thankful that she 'came through.' If she is proud of anything in the line of canoeing it is of succeeding in doing something that an old canoeist and prospector friend of hers solemnly warned her against, although he was well aware of her skill and her nerve. She had often shot rapids in her canoes, and a very thrilling little sport it makes when the rapids are suitably tame. But she longed to try her skill on those famous rapids leading into Sturgeon Lake, where the river takes a double bend before its waters escape. One day she did it, and did it successfully. Her friend, Mr Macdonald, was thankful, but surprised. Kathleen Rice was not.

A journey of a hundred miles, or even two or three hundred, seems a very mild activity to the person who can take a ticket at a railway station and get off the express train at his destination about two hours later. In that part of

Saskatchewan where Miss Rice lived such a journey almost certainly meant a matter of days, during the whole of which period her safety depended upon herself, the preparations made for the journey, and experience and knowledge.

Such a statement may seem exaggerated. It must be remembered that not only will the country be unknown, but no maps will be available of it, except those showing the major geographical features. There will be no roads and no bridges—an insuperable difficulty in a country which is riddled with lakes and rivers and streams, unless you have a canoe, preferably one with a motor, called the 'Johnson outboard,' which will make you almost as distinguished as the owner of a large limousine in a town.

Before she sets out, therefore, Miss Rice packs up enough food to keep her for the number of days that either she or her Indian acquaintances estimate that the journey may take. It must allow for accidents, but it must also be the minimum, because of the weight, for at times it will be necessary to leave the water and carry her belongings ashore to camp for the night. Besides the food, she must carry her canoe (weighing 40 lb.), her tent (10 lb.), her sleeping-bag (15 lb.), her gun, and her fishing-rod and tackle, their weight depending on which she takes. No small load even for a strong man!

The food she generally takes is flour and sugar and coffee, and perhaps condensed milk. Her gun and her fishing-rod are often used to help her to live 'off the land,' but she never relies on them. In such a country one must be prepared for all emergencies.

Lonely as such a life must be, far away from one's kith or kin, it has many compensations to offer. Firstly, there is the unspoiled beauty of it all. In winter there is the glory of the Northern Lights, the Aurora Borealis, a loveliness that seems to belong to heaven, and not to earth. When the snows have melted the sun brings a thousand flowers,

and the scrub and the rocks and forests are covered with anemones and lilies and what the Indians call 'ghost flower' and Messrs Sutton 'Indian Pipe,' or 'monotropa.' At night the stars are so brilliant in the clear sky that Miss Rice will sometimes not even put up her tent, but lie under the trees, playing the old game of trying to count their countless numbers. And this brings us to what she considers, rather characteristically, one of the greatest hardships of her solitary life during the summer months—a plague of mosquitoes attracted by the water, which for at least two months make life quite unbearable.

Generally speaking, Miss Rice goes to sleep without the slightest qualm of fear, however many hundreds of miles distant from other human companionship. Sometimes the night brings unexpected terrors, chiefly in the form of sudden storms. The network of muskegs, perpetually frozen, and shallow lakes, quickly heated up by a summer sun, cause unpredictable storms of almost tropical intensity to rush along the rocky valleys.

One of the easiest things, and at the same time one of the greatest dangers, in that part of the world is to lose one's way. A compass is not always an adequate precaution against this misfortune, for, as has been stated, much of the travelling must of necessity be done by river, over a route which continually winds and turns back on itself.

By daytime finding the way is difficult; by night-time it is evidently impossible; and one night, returning to camp, Miss Rice lost her way. To make matters worse—indeed, as bad as they could be—she was being followed by wolves, attracted by the strange scent of a human, and—she had only one match! Should she halt, build a fire, risking her one match and incurring dangerous delay—or what? Summoning all her hunter's wits to work, she tried to formulate the best plan. While she was cudgelling her brain she came across a hollow in the ground made by some

upturned roots, and crawled in it to hide. It was not an inviolable sanctuary by any means, but it was the only one she could find, and in she crawled, if only to think. While she was there, shrinking into the farthest corner, she heard a great bull-moose tap-tap-tapping over the bare rock a few feet away, also drawn there by curiosity.

Perhaps he had scented her; perhaps he had heard her breaking branches off a pine-tree to use as a mattress and mistaken her for another moose feeding on twigs. (A hunter shooting moose will often break twigs to attract them in his direction.) It was even possible that he recognized her neighbourhood as a protection from the wolves, who would have taken him instantly. Whatever the cause, the effect it had was excellent for both white woman and moose, for the wolves slunk off, and Miss Rice went into a sound sleep for the rest of the night.

Miss Rice not only lives on an island; she lives on a claim which she staked herself, but which hitherto has not been worked, although it is a promising one. To be candid, she likes her island, and does not like what she calls "the onrush of civilization"—that is, the appearance of people who are necessary to work the deposits. Even more she deplores the disappearance of the old type of prospector and his way of living in the wilderness. In spite of the hardships of the life, the thrill of discovery, the triumph of staking the claim, felling the saplings, trimming them, shaping the end with care, to mark its boundaries, never grow dim. There is an old jest, which may yet prove a commonplace, that the modern 'prospector' would buy his 'location posts' at a department store, transport them by aeroplane to the latest 'rush' region, fix the stakes round a likely location, and return the same day to hearth and home and comfort.

The old prospector's home was as near his claim or the land round which he was working as possible, and to make it was his first job on arriving there. Against a hill he would

dig a ditch, throw up turf to make foundations, sometimes five feet thick, build up his log walls, and add a wattle roof of saplings. The great open fireplace was built of stone, where stone could be found, and a cooking-pot swung eternally over its fire.

Modern 'improvements' are fast driving even that hospitable hearth away, for it is disappearing before the 'sheet-iron stove'—a light, collapsible affair, which also can be bought at a department store and carried easily wherever the owner wants. Convenient as it undoubtedly is, Miss Rice damns it for its lack of comfort. One latter-day amenity, however, has its good points, and that is the 'radio'—that marvellous voice which can reach the farthest corners of the earth, and which has changed in a startling manner life for many people living in desolate places.

Over three hundred years ago this intrepid woman's ancestor, William Brewster, for the sake of freedom, set sail for an unknown land. If the motive-force of her mode of life is still sought after reading her story it may, perhaps, be found in a spirit inherited from him.

CHAPTER IX

WALKING ROUND CENTRAL ASIA

The Wanderings of Ella Maillart, the Young Swiss Girl

THE scene was Berlin, but neither of the speakers—the man or the woman—was German. The man's Asiatic origin was disguised by the ordinary male garb of European countries, but he would have looked more natural astride a galloping horse, wrapped in a wide *khalat*. Their talk also was not of *cafés* or concerts or theatres, but of the life of the plains and the mountains and the deserts —of the Red Sands, the Black Sands, "the Hungry Steppes."

"Now, if I were to give you introductions to the chieftains I know it might make as much difficulty for you as them; they would be quite unable to conceive what sort of person you were," said the man to the girl. "I should have to be there too. But if you really mean to risk it go ahead: you'll see for yourself how my compatriots live.

"But," he added, making it evident that he had only half approved, "suppose you do spend six months or a year there and produce a book at the end of it? Where will that get you? You are obviously not one of those degenerates who have merely to be on the move, without knowing what they really want. I feel there's strength in you, and that the things you do you do well. Bear children. See them grow into strong, real men. That's what the world needs most."

"Yes, but that takes two," countered the girl, "and a sedentary life at that. No, not while the steppes call so powerfully to me. Besides, I want to earn my bread in a way that satisfies me."

Not only to earn her bread, but to discover the true meaning of life and to savour its quality to the full, she went on to explain. Such an unusual determination for a young woman under thirty that it must be further elaborated in her own words, taken from her book—*Turkestan Solo*.[1]

> My way leads towards desolate lands, treeless and empty of habitation. I shall pass months in a solitude as old as the hills. But then I shall be able to judge what crowds mean to me. With nothing but heaven over my sleeping body I shall learn what is a roof. Cooking over a fire of dung, I shall discover the true worth of wood.

All these things and more Ella Maillart was to endure in the six months which she allotted to her journey—a journey as amazing as any ever made by a white woman, which took her, most of the time alone and on foot, all round those wild spaces of Southern Central Asia, whose past history flourished before Christ and is punctuated with such amazing names as Alexander, Jenghis Khan, Tamerlane; whose present is being penetrated by the revolutionary principles of Lenin and Stalin.

Ella Maillart is Swiss—daughter of a Genevan father and a Danish mother, who sees in Ella's exploits all the romantic dreams of her own childhood realized in action. When Mme Maillart lived near the harbour of Copenhagen her uncles' schooners were constantly putting into port, and the child was always running on and off the boats at the quay and chatting to the sailors and making friends with them, from the merest little cabin-boy to the great Nansen himself.

After she married the little family, for Ella was soon added to it, used to spend their summers in a bungalow on the Lake of Geneva. Ella, a modern 'lake-dweller,' like the

[1] Putnam.

majority of Swiss children, adored aquatic sports, and became quite an expert swimmer and yachtswoman while still a child. In company with her friend Hermine, whose French naval officer father had taught them much, she used to go off in their own little boat round the lake for days at a time. She was twenty-one when she represented Switzerland at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, and the only woman against seventeen contestants from other countries.

Never a year passed after that without an attempt to spend some months under sail. She spent three months on board an English yacht sailing round the coast of Holland; in the following year she crossed with three other girls from Marseilles to Athens in a yawl of fourteen tons—*The Bonita*—without any motor, solely under sail—to spend six months at archæological work in Crete; the year after that she went off on a twenty-five tonner after tunny-fish round Brittany. Every succeeding year brought some new sailing thrill along with it, every one of which Ella turned to valuable experience.

Most Swiss boys and girls are passably good ski-ers, but that was not sufficient for Ella. She managed to become an expert in this branch of sport also, and for four years running, from 1931 to 1934, represented Switzerland at the International Ski-ing Federation in Italy, Austria, and Switzerland.

She founded, too, the first women's hockey club in Switzerland at Geneva in 1922, and played as captain against France ten years later.

With such achievements in sport, it is astonishing to find that she had any time left for serious work, but the girl who later crossed the Celestial Mountains and the red plains of Asia was no mere athlete. Her physical prowess was never an end in itself, but a means to an end, and so, on looking back over her youth, we discover that she taught French in

English schools, English to private pupils in Berlin, became a stenographer in Paris, took a part in a film produced in the Swiss mountains, helped on boats as a 'hand,' worked as cook on a small ketch, became winter sports correspondent for a Geneva newspaper, went out to Moscow to study the new youth movement there, and wrote a book on it—in fact, did any job that appealed to her, and did them all well, for she was a practical, competent, and level-headed young woman, much as she loved adventures and physical feats of daring.

It was while she was in Russia in 1930 that she made her first big journey, with the help of the Society of Proletarian Tourists. This was in the Caucasus Mountains, which she crossed from north to south by the highest passes and by Svanetia, finishing up by travelling all along the coast of the Black Sea, from Batum to Odessa.

During this period she became seized with the longing to penetrate the fastnesses of the great belt of mountains dividing the vast deserts of the Soviet Russian republics in Central Asia from the fastnesses of China. The idea haunted her, but to arrange it from the comfortably *bourgeois* surroundings of Geneva stamped one as being of necessity two things—both a millionaire and a lunatic. Ella was neither. She was a determined young woman with only a very little money, but sufficient experience to realize that if anything was to be achieved in the matter she would need to arrange it on the spot.

So in 1932 she went back to Moscow and set about interviewing all the offices and organizations and influential people whom she thought might be able to help her in her project. Her capital amounted to £100, and she wanted to travel thousands of miles. She wanted to go into regions where trains had never been heard of, let alone seen, and where the camel or horse was the ordinary mode of transport, as it had been three thousand years previously.

It is not surprising to discover that she met with one rebuff after another. "Why not go to Murmansk, near the Arctic Circle, instead?" proposed one helpful official. "Or why not travel as correspondent with one of our icebreakers, which for the first time in history is going to try to make the passage from the Arctic Ocean to the North Pacific, *via* the Bering Strait, in a single season?"

The difficulties placed in her way made her realize the more how desperate was her desire to live with the nomads of the desert as a nomad herself, under a tent of felt, to wander through hills and valleys without being touched by the irritating fringe of so-called 'civilized' life, to feel the hearts of the people before they were clutched by the beneficiary tentacles which the Soviet octopus was stretching out into the back of beyond in the effort to 'enlighten' the natives and to make them realize the blessings of schools, newspapers, tractors, the wireless, and the cinema!

But every attempt she made to 'escape,' as she put it, failed. Tired, dispirited, she was making a personal call on an old acquaintance in Moscow when she happened to meet there a party of four scientists leaving the next day for the very part of Asia she ached to see—the High Plains of Kirghizistan. But hardly had they agreed, most reluctantly, to admit her to their party when they telephoned to say that they had thought better of it: they could not possibly accept responsibility for a young foreigner in a region of such dangers and complications. Because Ella Maillart has never accepted a 'no' that she was not inclined for she continued to pester them: "Could she not at least accompany them as far as Lake Issik-Kol? They could leave her there while they climbed the mountain-passes."

After some deliberation they agreed, and by hook or by crook Ella managed to get herself on to their train in time, complete (had they but known it!) with mountaineering outfit and stores of food for the journey.

All long train journeys in Russia contain an element of uncertainty; this one held more than most. But they finally arrived at their destination safely—the town of Frunze, the capital of the Kirghiz Autonomous Soviet Republic—and there, after a night at a rest-house, looked round for a lorry that would take them to their first stop, the stud-farm near the shore of Lake Issik, for there in that remote village was an amazing place where magnificent horses were bred.

After hours of search and many misadventures on the road, which was nothing more than a track, they reached the lake—a deep, vast sheet of water twenty times as large as the Lake of Geneva. A little motor-freighter took them up the lake to a settlement which was different from anything Ella had ever before seen, for there was only one wooden building in the place: all the other dwellings were 'yurts.' A yurt is an ingenious form of tent: six or eight pieces of lattice-work, about 4 feet 6 inches high, are set up in a circle and fastened together with leather thongs. To the tops of this lattice foundation long poles are fastened which support the walls and roof of felt, the latter of which can be removed at will.

From this little settlement, or *Kurort*, they proceeded to the 'town' of Karakol, where they were to buy horses, food, saddles, and harness—for Ella by this time had managed to worm herself into the farther stages of the expedition. The bazaar, where all trading was done, as it had been for thousands of years, was in the very heart of the city, and the vendors seemed to comprise every nationality under the sun. There were Kirghiz, with their *manaps*, or patriarchs; there were Chinese Doungans; there were beggars and dervishes; Russians, Uzbeks, and Armenians. The articles for sale were even more varied—daggers, slippers, cooking-pots, old field-glasses, and hunting falcons. After much searching and bargaining they found the saddles they

wanted, bought the horses from the market, and had them shod with crampons, on account of the glaciers and rocks they would have to negotiate, got their own boots studded with nails and a Primus resoldered—a little job performed by prisoners in the local gaol—and hired a guide named Jocubia and a garrulous interpreter called Matkerim.

The caravan was now ready to set forth, the mounts laden with sleeping-bags, sacks of provisions, and a tent on an extra pack-horse. Ella's Russian fellow-travellers wished to make for the Syrt. Where she herself would finally get to the Swiss girl could not have said. She longed to cross the mountains into the Chinese province of Sinkiang, but practically all the money she had started with she had spent on necessary equipment. More immediate was the problem of sticking on her horse, as they went up mountains, down passes, through strongly flowing fords. She needed every ounce of physical endurance she had stored up in the past for the new sorts of trials she encountered. But for every discomfort there was a compensation in the thrills and the interest that the novelty of the scenery brought her. For example, as they passed through the villages where the Soviet had built houses Ella noticed a brown yurt by every house—just one small token of the inability to change the nomadic character of the people overnight, for they are so unhappy between four walls that they occasionally stable their animals in the house, while they live in the tent outside or pierce large holes in the ceiling over the hearth!

Fairly soon they reached the last village on their route. They made the most of it, and ate as much as they could before beginning their climb through the mountains. The telephone wire ended abruptly in a Soviet guardhouse, and at that point began the trails leading by four different passes into the region of Kashgar, in China.

The trail they took rose straight out of a steep ravine, first rising, then falling, in so precipitous a manner that the

bumping of the horses shook their well-strapped loads loose. Soon they were so high that their altimeter failed, and although they were roasted by the sun during the daytime the evening air was damp and cold. They went on and on until the first *aul* appeared—a cluster of Kirghiz dwellings—where they were given hospitality, a drink of *koumiss*, or fermented mares' milk, and a warm before the fire in the yurt. The usual machine-made articles are not known in that remote region, and the travellers were not allowed to sleep before their rubber-covered sleeping-bags had been examined, their shoes, and, indeed, every other item.

The second stage of the journey was the Chuguchak Pass, nearly 14,000 feet high, and although the horses were in rather a bad way the little party set off again with as little delay as possible. A black track, a steep moraine, a tongue of glacier, were passed, one by one, until they reached a point where the route was strewn with whitened bones and the decaying carcasses of animals. An icy wind mingled with the blinding sun—a sun so violent that Ella had to bind a silk handkerchief over her eyes, as she had lost her sun-glasses.

At the highest point of the pass lay the eternal snow, and they were glad to strike downwards towards the plains of the Syrt, through a broad valley 12,000 feet high, from which they saw from a distance the stone building of the Glacier Observatory of the Tian-shan Mountains.

This observatory must be one of the most desolate outposts in the world. It was staffed by eight people, none of whom stayed more than a year. When the ground was dug for its foundations five feet below the surface it was found to be tundra frozen solid. Below that there was only ice to an unknown depth. The main purpose of the station was to observe the glaciers from which the river Narin issued, but it also sent out the meteorological bulletins to Tashkent

by wireless—a modern miracle which the Chinese believed to be the demon of the mountain.

The travellers had planned if possible to spend a night at the observatory, and their arrival caused great excitement. While they were there two of the party went off to attack the heights of Sari Tor—a near-by mountain which had never been scaled. Unfortunately Ella Maillart had developed a high temperature and had to be left behind, and she was filled with envy when the two climbers reported a successful assault from the left, the snow on the right being powdery to the top.

Powdery snow—to the top! In other words, perfect for ski-ing. It was sufficient for Ella Maillart. The very next day, her fever having left her, she set out with her skis. Between rocks, up the slippery wall of the glacier, under a tearing, icy wind, she laboured on and on. She took off a ski to attend to a small fastening, and her foot sank immediately to her thigh. In that rarefied atmosphere it was necessary to rest every hundred yards, and it was so cold that when she took off her gloves to turn the spool in her camera her fingers stuck fast to the burning metal. But at last she had scaled the peak—16,000 feet high—a strange triumph to cap success in the "playground of Europe."

Such a thrill, however, was nothing but a mere episode in the journey. Their way lay through a landscape of superb desolation, and they savoured its delights to the full, hard as the life was. "You're a soft one!" said one of the party to Ella Maillart, who was discovered tearing away some grass from under her sleeping-bag in order to have a more even surface!

Hot as was the sun in that high altitude, never a day passed without its flurry of snow, and the nights were bitterly cold. But they put up their tents and warmed themselves before a fire made of *kisiak*, or dried cow-dung; they washed in icy rivulets, and they had to hunt for their

food—pigeons, moufflons, argali, and marmots. Sometimes they met Kirghiz riders with eagles on their fists for hunting, in the medieval manner. Once they were taken for bandits by a Kirghiz who mistook their poles for guns.

In that roof of the world every hour brought a new thrill to the heart. Even Ella Maillart, brought up in the country of mountains, had never seen anything comparable to the wide, sweeping valleys, locked in by red, blue, yellow, and black ranges, crossed by colossal glaciers of pure white and moraines like immense stony waves—all against a sky as blue as the Italian sky. The pass they were traversing was very little used, for it was cut by a great crevasse—so deep and dark that as the little party negotiated it, roped together, they dared not look down it.

At last they were nearly at the Chinese frontier, in land till recently quite unoccupied, for it was so unknown that nobody had cared whether they owned it or not. A few miles farther would land them in Turfan, a Chinese town of incredible heat. Before them a yellow line merged with the blue of the sky: it was the Gobi—Takla Makan, the Terrible.

"What would I not have given to have gone on into the unknown?" afterwards wrote the young Swiss girl in the book telling of her journey, *Turkestan Solo*. "What joy it would be to go down there and burn my boats behind me, and go on always, intoxicated by the thousand faces of the Unknown!"

Had she had a visa there is no knowing what she might have done, where she might have gone. But in Berlin and Moscow she had been told that it would take five or six months to get an answer from the capital of the district, Urumchi, and she abandoned the idea. Actually, had she but guessed it, it was fortunate for her, for two years afterwards, in 1934, when staying in Peking, she met one of the companions of the famous Sven Hedin, who told her that

she and her little group had been sighted by bandits, and had they only put their feet over the frontier they would have been taken prisoner.

And so she turned away sadly and followed the others, up a path so steep that she declared that it helped enormously to hang on to the tail of one's horse and let it drag one after it.

It was a strange climate. They were so far south—almost on the latitude of Delhi—that when the sun came out it was almost blistering, but the altitude was so great that the intense cold forced them to proceed on foot, instead of on horse-back, to keep warm. It snowed and snowed. Days went by before they once more reached the valleys, with their green pastures and forests of firs, and met an occasional caravan, with a herd of camels carrying yurts, cauldrons, and sometimes a cradle.

The time came for them to turn their back on China and return. The horses were not in too good condition; but they had to be taken care of, so that they could be sold to pay off their guides. Worst misfortune of all, one of them cast a shoe, and there was not a single nail left to repair it. It was hopeless to expect to negotiate glaciers and moraines in such fashion; there was nothing for it but to leave guide and horse behind and take a new one.

The pass they took was riddled with dangerous crevasses, but they reached Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakstan, in safety—a typical city, with brave new buildings, but streets covered under thick layers of liquid mud.

There the moment came for Ella Maillart to choose her way again. The idea of going on to China still haunted her, but she looked for the Consul for the Sinkiang province in vain. The alternative she decided upon was Tashkent and the historic cities of Samarkand, Bokhara, and Khiva. The rest of the little party had to return to Moscow, so she said good-bye to them and became a vagabond in Turkestan.

This was an entirely new sort of expedition, and demanded a new sort of outfit, so she set about selling her ice-axe, rope, and crampons, and bought in their place a few garments and sturdy boots, bread, sugar, rice, sleeping-bag, and dictionary, and filled her rucksack with cooking-stove, spirit-flask, camera, medicines, frying-pan, pipe, and a few more stores.

With some difficulty she obtained a railway ticket for Tashkent, but to her dismay train after train left the station without her being able to find a seat or even space in any of the packed compartments. At last there came a 'fourth-class' train, or *tovarpassagirov*, with carriages like cattle-trucks, put on at times to help to clear the railway stations, in which, by great pertinacity, she found an unorthodox seat on the footboard.

At Tashkent there were more crowds. But she hoisted her sacks on to her back and explored the town for something to eat. Alas, there was only camel to be found! She went hungry.

Tashkent lies in the heart of a great cotton-growing district, and one of the first journeys she made, with the aid of a new friend, was to a 'cotton village.' It was not an easy or a comfortable journey, for the horses' hoofs sank with every step into more than a foot of thick dust; and when they got there it proved to be a dreary place—chiefly 500 acres of cotton, irrigated by dikes dating in some places from before the Christian era.

On the next day she took part in the local shooting-matches, blinding herself temporarily with bad gunpowder in the process. Then she interviewed first an anarchist exile and, secondly, one of the executive heads of the district, who used his influence to procure a seat for her on board an aeroplane for Samarkand.

"A fortnight earlier you would have met an Englishman," said the head of the aerodrome to her when she got there.

"But after spending two days here he went back to London. He was stand-offish, and said nothing. Are they all like that over there?"

"Yes," laughed the girl who was not. "That's their way towards strangers."

She found a lodging in the square courtyard of an old mosque, or *madrasah*—an ancient whitewashed cell. The city was fascinating. Hour after hour she sat on the solitary terrace, gazing over the sea of flat roofs, domes, minarets, and cupolas, some of them built as long ago as the eleventh century, of a beauty that still astonishes the beholder. In contrast to this world of decayed loveliness was the busy life of to-day—the letter-writers, the blacksmiths, and the cobblers, all plying their trades with energy, so that it resembled a stage scene from *Chu Chin Chow*.

One of the most interesting types that Ella Maillart met was a lovely ex-dancer from Leningrad, who had become a motor-lorry driver, whose powers of endurance at the wheel eclipsed any of the men's. She met, too, women workers in the factory, veiled and unveiled, and she went out into the fields to meet the women there. The host who was to conduct her round was lying in his hut shivering with fever, but he sat up to do the honours, drank tea from the same bowl as Ella, and offered her *kishmish*, or dried grapes. She went through to the women's quarters.

"Mustapha ill," she sympathized. "*Tabib* [Doctor] been?"

"Yes, yes."

"What did he say?"

"Typhus."

When she saw Mustapha later she refused his further offers of hospitality with politeness!

Many were the adventures she had in Samarkand. She went out to a farmyard where the natives were cooking the silk cocoons in great vats; she visited the mausoleum of

Hodja Daniar and the observatory of Ulug Beg: on the calculations worked out by him in the fifteenth century all the calendars of the Middle Ages were based. She was a spectator at the last day of the trial of *Bassmatchi*, or bandits, proceedings which had gone on for months, but on this day came to a head with death-sentences for nineteen of them.

It was a life as colourful as a dream, but it had to end, and once more Ella took train, to be deposited at the station for Bokhara, about 150 miles from Samarkand. The once-renowned Bokhara was a city of ruins and tombs, and the main event of the day was the hunt for bread. Ella had to join in the food queue, and could not prevent herself from telling her neighbours that on the other side of the world grain was being used for firing locomotives or being thrown into the sea. They were sure that she was lying, and an old man smiled broadly and said, "Well, then, if they are such lunatics things must be in the hell of a mess."

Bokhara was the town which the Rev. Joseph Wolff, the amazing Jew who became an Anglican minister and who used to wander about Europe like a medieval scholar, entered in 1843 in order to discover the fate of two fellow-countrymen who had been permitted to enter the country on a commercial mission.[1]

The Emir could hardly believe such daring interference. "I can kill as many Persians as I like, and no one bothers," he exclaimed in wonder. "But I have hardly laid a hand on two Englishmen when a person arrives from remote London commissioned to look into the matter."

When Ella Maillart visited the town it had decayed from a vast city of 180,000 inhabitants, with a Persian slave in every house, to a mass of wretched humans, struggling to exist on the buying and selling of old rubbish, against the all-important background of King Cotton.

[1] See *Joseph Wolff*, by H. P. Palmer (Heath Cranton).

Charjui was her next stage, and she considered herself lucky to find a passenger-train going there. She sat opposite a man who was absolutely silent until he observed her watch, and then "for real loquacity," she observed, "give me some one you have never met before, and whom in a few hours, anonymous to all eternity, you will never see again." Who should know better of this than Ella Maillart?

To get a passage on a boat *from* Charjui was more difficult. As usual in Russian territory, there were six people for every single place. But by virtue of being a privileged 'foreigner' Ella Maillart succeeded in buying a place on the deck of a paddle-boat going down the Amu Darya. Sitting in acute discomfort among the usual scrum of nationalities, she amused herself by pretending that she was on a sumptuous yacht, having eggs and bacon served to her for breakfast.

The paddle-boat, after many misadventures, for she was an old, old tub, finally reached the port of Turt Kol, or Four Lakes. The 'port' consisted of two tents in a cotton-field, and she had to walk a mile into the town to interview officials who could advise her about the place to find a reliable caravan going to Astrakhan or Orenburg.

"You'll freeze on the way. I advise you not to try it," was the only reply she could get. "You don't know what it is to be on a camel in thirty degrees of frost."

In another Government office a young Karakalpak with big moustaches went into transports of joy at the sight of her. "Comrades! Comrades!" he called. "A tourist! A tourist from Paris, from France! You are our very first!"

In that arid region the gales from the desert of Red Sands tore the very leaves from the trees. People went muffled up in whatever garments they could get. The headdresses were even more varied. Ella amused herself by making detailed notes of them. There was the *toppo*, the *tiubiteka* (a sort of corrugated crown), the *chugurma*, a kind of weeping willow of curly hair, the *kabardinka* of grey astrakhan, and

the immense round caracal brim of the *papakha*, besides the ordinary pale felt bonnet.

As usual, the most fascinating part of the town was the markets and the people and animals—asses, horses, camels. However, she did not want to be left there all the winter, and if the cold continued the Sea of Aral would be frozen over, and all navigation stopped. But the great problem was—how to escape; as usual there was the inevitable surplus of would-be passengers. But a small motor-boat happened to come along, which took her twenty miles down the river. Next she and a seafaring man hailed a *kayuk*, or local sailing-boat with immense sails, crammed with men and merchandise, which took her a little farther to Kopalik. Next she hired an *arba*, or cart with two great wooden wheels, to drive her to Novo Urgenj—a desert journey that took three hours to do seven and a half miles. There she wanted to catch the mail *arba* for Khiva, 'city of nightingales,' the ancient Mongol capital, which had been destroyed by invading sand, and where, when the English Captain Burnaby stayed there in the last century, the whole population flocked to see him, because he ate with a knife and fork.

Had the twentieth-century population only realized it, the solitary young Swiss girl was an object of greater interest. No Western European foot, of a certainty, had trod those tortuous, secret alleyways since the days of the Captain himself, alleyways of a city where slavery was not abolished till 1873, and where the market price of a 'sound' Russian was then about 13*s*., and where Persian women were considered superior to Russian.

She wandered round the gigantic minarets, the harem which had once housed the eighty wives of the last Khan, and which has now been elevated to the 'Pedagogic Institute'! She watched the dyers with their leather vats, the Armenian weaving women, and studied the walls panelled with enamelled tiles so exquisite that they looked like

hangings of the loveliest brocades—an impression strangely out of place in that city of tombs and deserted courtyards.

It was near that city that she had one of the most remarkable experiences of her whole journey. She was in the post-office when she met a young German. "Yes," he said, in answer to her amazement, "we have a German colony here at Ak Metchet that has been in existence for over fifty years. We came from our republic on the Volga."

It sounded so incredible that Ella Maillart determined to investigate, borrowed a bicycle, and rushed off on it over the thick sand of the desert towards the oasis. It was difficult going. The sand silted up the wheels and made the machine skid violently, and when she arrived she was bathed in perspiration with her exertions. But she forgot it all in the excitement of seeing a farm with white curtains at the windows and of talking to Europeans, among them two spectacled old ladies knitting in straight-backed arm-chairs.

"It's rather a squeeze to find room for us all in the colony," they told her. "There are now 340, and others are coming from the Volga."

Ella listened while they told her more strange stories—of how they first begged asylum from the Emir of Bokhara, their first hard beginnings. She was taken to see the little church and schoolroom; she lunched off boiled eggs, rusks, coffee with milk and honey, and she told the young girls of the colony the Christian names in vogue at the moment in Germany.

Her next stage was back to Novo Urgenj, where she had to find a boat to take her across the Sea of Aral, for to go across the desert to Astrakhan was more than risky: only recently a caravan of five hundred camels had been attacked and destroyed.

Fortunately she caught the last boat, or, rather, a dismantled boat towed by the regular boat. The passengers

lay huddled together on benches, so many that their dead weight caused the towing-boat to lose speed, fail to answer the helm, and finally run aground. They had hardly got off again before they grounded once more.

It was bitterly cold, so cold that two passengers tore up the floor-boards, put an iron plate over the greasy bilge-water, broke off the handrails from the deck, and made a fire. Jackals were howling in the reeds on the banks. There were tigers in the region. On the following morning they were released by some fishermen, and Ella Maillart, determined to avoid another possibly fatal grounding, this time wrapped herself in everything she possessed and took charge of the helm herself.

But so broken was the helm, so capricious and strong and swirling the racing current of the river, that it happened again and yet again. By dint of enlisting the help of all the passengers both boats were released and got safely to Khodjeili, a large port, where Ella immediately dashed off to the wireless hut to see about her 125-mile passage to Kantusiak. She was horrified to learn that Kantusiak was already closed, and would remain so until the ice broke up.

"What would be the best way to strike the railway-line?" she inquired.

"Well, at Chimbai, on the main channel," a friendly cargo captain told her, "you'll find caravans starting for Kazalinsk—about three hundred miles. That means about a fortnight in the desert. The only thing is that without a *chuba* (enormous pelisse) and *valinki* (boots of thick felt) you'd freeze to death if the buran began to blow."

But freezing was better than wintering in that abandoned region. Ella decided to chance it.

She crossed the ferry of the river, found a cart to take her two miles, and an *arba* that would take her on another twenty-eight miles to Chimbai. The slow, monotonous journey went on for hours in cold so intense that to water

the horse it was necessary to break the ice of the canal. Although it was sunrise when they set out it was already dark when they reached the narrow alleys of Chimbai, and all the *chai-kanas*, or inns, were shut, so that it was necessary to spend the night on the table of the *Soyusarbakesh* (trade union meeting-room). Not till the next morning was Ella informed that the camels did not leave from Chimbai at all, but from a place twenty-five miles east. Once more she engaged a cart and emaciated horse and set out through the dreary fields.

But one misfortune after another seemed to dog her. Firstly, her driver refused to go the whole twenty-five miles in the one day, and, secondly, when she woke up in the morning her thick boots—priceless in that part of the world—had been stolen from under her pillow. Outside the temperature was already 35 degrees below zero, and she had to cross the desert in socks!

Worst of all, by the time they reached their destination the caravan had gone. Camels might possibly be going north in three days, she was informed, but it was not likely. No, there was not a single pair of *valinkis* available, either.

For six days Ella Maillart fretted in the place. Camels seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. On the seventh day she spotted three beasts in the village, and immediately rushed off to make inquiries. Yes, said a strange merchant, he knew where two beasts might be obtained. But after obtaining a deposit he disappeared. However, the prospects were obviously more hopeful, and Ella began to make preparations. She found an odd pair of boots, bought a kilogram of camel's meat and some mutton fat, and, almost before she was ready, the camel she had sought for was led before her—a great beast with an oval mattress for saddle. Three Kazaks were also going that way, and arrangements were made for her to accompany them.

Their way lay almost due north, through country already half frozen. The march would have to be continued through the night as well as in the daytime, with only brief halts for food. It was so cold that every hour Ella had to get down from her camel and walk a little to get warm. Once she nearly lost the rest of the party in doing this. Day after day and through most of the night the camels padded on, through brush, sand-dunes, the beds of lakes, until they arrived at the last *kuduk*, or water-hole. There each camel was given twenty pailfuls to drink, for afterwards they could only count on snow. The landscape changed into a world of grey sky and grey ice. To make tea the ice had to be melted, and the result was only a filthy salt beverage. Before Ella could eat her meat it had to be thawed in the frying-pan.

Every night they made a fire from the brushwood of the saxaul, whose roots go four feet down into the ground, and which takes a hundred years for its short trunk to grow as thick as a man's leg. Sometimes it meant making a hole in the snow and sand before it would light. The oldest Kazak took the best place near its warmth as a matter of course; Ella, whatever her importance in the world, was nothing but a mere woman to him.

At last they were half across the desert. The stunted bushes looked like enormous tufts of white and grey ostrich-feathers. The wind was so cold that it would have cut off the eyelashes and frozen the face, so that Ella had to convert her flannel body-belt into a turban for the head.

The trail seemed unending. Sometimes the little party met other travellers, but all going south, where the weather was warmer and food cheaper. They got to a point where the bones of asses and camels scattered the route and there was no more brushwood for fires to be found. The temperature was at least 25 degrees Centigrade below zero.

At last they neared Kazalinsk. There still remained the great river of the Syr Darya to cross. It was covered with ice—so difficult that the very day they arrived a camel had broken its leg while crossing it. By the greatest insistence only was Ella able to hire one to take her over it. But they reached its outskirts in safety, and so began, as she says, "the bitter days that go by the name of return. There is no likelihood of anything unexpected happening now," she concluded. "The real journey is over."

CHAPTER X

THE "RECORDWOMAN"

Some Adventures of Mrs Gwenda Stewart

THE French have adopted very many English words in the realm of sport, and sometimes use them rather oddly. More than one French paper heads an account of the doings of that world-famous racing motorist Mrs Stewart with the title "Recordwoman," all in one word. Others call her *La Femme la plus vite du monde* ("The Fastest Woman in the World"). While it is true that Mrs Stewart has travelled on wheels faster than any other woman and than most men, let it be stated that she is an extraordinarily modest, shy, and retiring lady, from whom it is by no means easy to extract the story of a life which, short as it still is, has been already packed with enough adventure to satisfy the most ardent thrill-lover.

Mrs Stewart is Irish by birth, the daughter of an Army officer. She belongs to County Roscommon. She was seventeen when the War broke out, and nothing would satisfy her but to take an active part. At fifteen she had already ridden a motor-cycle, and during the next two years she picked up a good deal of knowledge of motor mechanics. She joined an ambulance unit, and began her career by driving a Red Cross lorry in the Balkans. In 1916 she was with the Serbian Army, and later with the Rumanians when they were being driven back by the Austrians. She was decorated for exploits under fire on that front.

"I nearly starved," she says. "There was hardly any food at all." In reply to questions about mud and bad roads she merely nodded. These, it appears, were so much a part of the day's work as not to be worth mentioning, but

she did admit that it was generally better to take to the open country than to trust to the appalling quagmires misnamed roads. Escaping from Rumania, she went northward into Russia, where she drove a lorry for some months for the Russian Army in the Caucasus. The work was very severe. It takes muscle as well as skill to handle a heavy lorry in the passes of those great mountains. But food, at any rate, was not so scarce as it had been in Rumania.

In 1917, when the Russian revolution came, she had to leave, and by devious and dangerous ways returned to England. She did not settle down. Life in England seemed a tame business after her adventurous existence during her years abroad, and she confesses that she grew very bored. She decided to return to the motor-cycle and to take up racing.

It was not an easy matter to persuade any of the firms interested in racing to permit a woman to ride for them. Such a thing was practically unknown at the time, and prejudice was very strong. She had to prove her ability before she was permitted to take part in racing, and it was not until 1922 that she rode her first race. She was not well off, and one of her difficulties was that no company would give her insurance against damage either to herself or to her machine on the track.

In 1923 she married and went with her husband to British Columbia. Thence they travelled north into Alaska, where they lived in a boat on the mighty Yukon river, leading a most primitive life and depending chiefly on their guns or fishing-lines for food. They went down the Yukon on a raft, on which they had built a cabin, in which they lived. The Yukon, it will be remembered, runs north, and they passed the Arctic Circle and spent a whole winter in the Far North. Mrs Stewart stopped at a mission during the frozen months, and paid for her keep by shooting game for the kitchen. She hunted far across the wilds, killing caribou, the reindeer of Arctic America, and seeing them pass in

thousands during their annual migration. She spent long weeks without a glimpse of daylight, and saw the Northern Lights flaring across the sky. She had suffered the extremes of cold, experiencing temperatures of sixty degrees below zero. Finally she came out across the ice in winter with a dog-team.

Back in England, she turned again to her old love, motor-cycle racing, and in 1925 astonished the motor-cycling world by securing the world's twenty-four hour record on a Rudge-Whitworth. It was the first time that a woman had made good in any such contest, and there was amazement that a woman could have the strength or endurance to go through with it—let alone obtain a record! But Mrs Stewart, though small and lightly built, is probably one of the fittest women alive, and has always kept herself in the pink of condition. For some years she continued to race, chiefly at Brooklands, on motor-cycles and on the three-wheel Morgan cycle-car. At present she holds no fewer than seventy-six cycle-car records, besides her many better known motor-car records.

Mrs Stewart was educated in Paris, and was always fond of France. She has the great advantage of speaking French like a native. In 1925 and 1926 she raced at the then new Autodrome at Montlhéry, outside Paris, and secured a world's record for a twenty-four-hour light-car race. At Arpajon she did the flying kilometre in a Morgan at 186 kilometres per hour—another world's record. In 1927 came disaster. Mrs Stewart was travelling at something like ninety miles an hour on a Clement Gladiator motor-cycle when she crashed. She was picked up for dead with a fractured skull and other injuries. A person less fit than she might have died, but after long months of suffering she made a complete recovery, and went back to racing with greater energy than ever. But not to motor-cycles. These she abandoned definitely.

Asked how it was that so many racing motor-cyclists have survived falls which, on the face of them, looked as if they must have had fatal results, Mrs Stewart answered that the reason is that they slide—that is, supposing they fall on the track. Of course, if they hit a fence or a tree that is another story. Yet the fact remains, and is attested by many racing cyclists, that a crash at ninety miles an hour has often less serious consequences than one at half that speed.

As if motor-racing had not sufficient thrills, Mrs Stewart, in company with her husband, Colonel R. N. Stewart, tried a new experiment by crossing the North Sea in a little open motor-boat only thirty feet long. She was called the *Sea Hawk*, and had a speed in calm water of forty-five miles an hour, but on this occasion the water was anything but calm, and soon after the venturesome couple left Aberdeen they ran into very bad weather and had a most anxious time. Yet they arrived at Stavanger, in Norway, safely after a bad buffeting. This was the first and only time that the crossing had been made in a small, open craft of this type, and is not the sort of feat that is likely to be imitated.

Soon after Mrs Stewart's motor-cycle accident E. A. D. Eldridge had the terrible accident with his two-litre Miller car which brought his racing career to an untimely end. Mrs Stewart, who was now in racing partnership with Mr W. D. Hawkes, purchased the remains of this car and rebuilt it, and in this she obtained several new high-speed records. They also used an 1100-centimetre Derby, and it is in cars of this make that Mrs Stewart has since been collecting fresh laurels.

In March 1932 fire broke out in the garage and workshops at Montlhéry. A whole range of racing garages was utterly destroyed, including those of Mrs Stewart and Mr Hawkes. In addition, the track itself was so badly damaged that it had to be closed for repairs, and was not opened again for several months. This was a very heavy blow to

Mrs Stewart and her partner, for in one night they lost all the stock of special tools, gauges, and the like which they had been laboriously collecting during the past five years. Undiscouraged, they went on with their work at the Derby factory at Courbevoie, and there completed a new racing car, the Derby Special, the design of which is founded on that of the F. W. D. Miller, but which incorporates many new features.

While practising with this car she had two curious accidents, either of which might have had very serious consequences. On one occasion she bent forward when travelling at about 135 miles per hour. In a flash the fearful force of the wind flattened her crash-helmet right down over her eyes, completely blinding her. A car travelling at such speed takes a good deal of stopping, and had she been on a curve a crash would have been inevitable. But she kept her head—she always does—and succeeded in pulling up in safety.

During another attempt the nut on the top of the carburettor float-chamber worked loose, and the cover came off just as Mrs Stewart was opening flat out on the straight, attaining a speed of well over 140 miles an hour. At that particular instant she happened to have her mouth open, and received a charge of pure alcohol mingled with castor-oil, which the wind-pressure forced down her throat. Quite undisturbed by these accidents, Mrs Stewart, on the last Sunday of May 1933, proceeded to break all records for the track by covering the flying mile at 143·29 miles an hour.

For the benefit of those who do not watch track-racing it should be explained that motoring at speed on a straight stretch, such as the beach at Daytona, and on a closed circuit, such as the tracks at Brooklands or Montlhéry, are two very different things. So perfectly is the Montlhéry track constructed, so excellent the design, that a car can be

physical condition might pull himself together for the few seconds required for a flying mile. It is equally possible that some small inattention to detail might not have to be paid for in so short a dash.

In a twenty-four-hour race if a driver fails he can be replaced by another, and there are stops for petrol and oil, during which tyres can be replaced and small alterations made.

In the 'hour' there is no stop, no chance to change a worn tyre or replace a tired driver, and the record for the hour stands at just under 135 miles. Such a performance implies that man (or woman) and machine must both be in absolutely perfect condition. There must not be the slightest oversight in the preparation—every split pin must be in place—for if not there will most certainly be a reckoning.

"Moreover," Mrs Stewart says, "the efficiency of the driver must be the full hundred per cent. in the fifty-ninth as in the first minute, however much his arms may ache or his body cry out at the incessant hammering it will have to endure. His concentration must never flag; he must never cease to observe with acute attention the instruments in the cockpit, the general behaviour of the car, and the instructions signalled to him lap by lap from his *dépôt*. Should he, for instance, fail to follow on the track the exact path which experience has shown to be the right one, then his tyres will not hold out."

Furthermore, throughout the whole of that hour, and it may well seem the longest in his life, the driver may at any moment be called upon to take a decision in a split second, on the correctness of which may depend not only the life of a machine which is the product of the best brains in the world of design and worth thousands of pounds, but also his own life.

The driver is but a part of the whole, and Mrs Stewart declares that it is the fashion to attribute to the driver more

of the glory in a successful performance than is rightfully his due. She thinks it a pity that the car itself cannot be interviewed and made to describe its sensations when the driver, entering the west banking at a wrong angle, is forced to correct with a violent skid, sending a shock of torture through the whole frame of the machine. To Mrs Stewart the racing car is a living, sentient thing, and in her opinion far too little credit is given by the public to the designers, the builders, or even to the mechanics who care for it.

Her own mechanic, Fred Cann, came to her as an apprentice at the age of thirteen, when she and her husband were at Brooklands. He accompanied her to France, where he has settled very happily and married a French girl. *Un grand garçon*, the French call him.

The car with which Mrs Stewart has accomplished such great things is a front-wheel-drive Derby, with an engine of eight cylinders in line, fitted with a centrifugal compressor turning at five and a half times the speed of the engine, whose revolutions are 6000 a minute. It was built at the Derby works at Courbevoie by Mr W. D. Hawkes, who is a director of the firm and himself a distinguished racing driver.

Although Mrs Stewart has always kept herself in the pink of condition, yet in long races she suffered much. There was severe pain in her neck, shoulders, arms, and knuckles. She also suffered at times from cramp in the right leg, so that she could hardly lift her foot from the accelerator. Then, as she says, "I found Thémard, king of masseurs."

Thémard is more than a masseur, for he has put Mrs Stewart on a diet and has given her exercises which, combined with his massage, have made a new woman of her. He made her swim, using the crawl stroke. This has done wonders for her shoulder-muscles. He allows her only grilled meat and fresh vegetables. She used to smoke, but

that he has cut off completely, and Mrs Stewart declares that she is much better without her cigarettes. He makes her drink water, with just an occasional glass of sound French wine. No athlete is kept in stricter training than Mrs Stewart, but she does not mind these small privations, for her one ambition is to beat records, and to go on beating them.

In December 1934 Mrs Stewart was guest of honour at the annual dinner of the Women's Automobile and Sports Association in London, and sat next to Sir Malcolm Campbell. Sir Malcolm proposed her health. This chapter may be closed with a quotation from a writer in *The Light Car*:

> Incomparable Mrs Gwenda Stewart still defies compare. . . . I respect, nay, reverence, this lady as the only member of her sex concerning whose prowess even the most female-mad newspaper-man cannot exaggerate. She really does lick men at their own tough game.

On August Bank Holiday 1935 Mrs Stewart was beaten at Brooklands by Mrs K. Petre, who lapped at 134·2 miles an hour. On the following day, driving her tiny Derby single-seater, nominally rated at 13 horse-power, Mrs Stewart regained the record with a speed of 135·95 miles an hour.

CHAPTER XI

THE EDGE OF THE EMPIRE

The Tremendous Travels of Eva Hasell

Miles travelled by van . 1522
Miles driven or by boat . 778
Miles walked . . . 1132

THAT is the brief record of one season's work in the great north-western diocese of Athabaska by Miss Eva Hasell in the summer and autumn of 1932. And Miss Hasell has been doing this sort of thing ever since 1921.

We in England are almost entirely ignorant of conditions in North-western Canada. The size of the country is paralysing. You could drop England anywhere in it and lose it. The pioneers who have pushed up into these great wilds are inarticulate. They do not write home about their hardships. They are too busy trying to live. The few visitors are either business men who are trying to sell something or sportsmen engaged in hunting or fishing. They see little or nothing of the lives of the settlers. It is only when some one like Miss Hasell travels the country, engaged in visiting the people and helping them both by good words and good deeds, that we get a true picture of the desperate struggle for mere existence.

There is no dole there for the out-of-work as we know it, and there are no poor-law institutions for those unable to help themselves. The Provincial Governments do give relief in cases of extreme destitution through the police, but the nearest policeman may be a hundred miles away from the sufferer. There are hardly any doctors or hospitals,

churches or clergy. Many families have not even neighbours near enough to give them help, and help has been most sorely needed during the terrible years of world slump.

We think that we have suffered here in Britain. If you will read this chapter of Miss Hasell's experiences you will agree that our poorest slum-dwellers have never experienced miseries so terrible as have befallen these pioneers on the edge of our Empire.

First you must hear how Miss Hasell came to take up this really wonderful work in the North-west. She is a North Country woman who from 1915 to 1920 was Sunday-school organizer for the diocese of Carlisle. She was also an accomplished motorist, who had driven a car for the Red Cross during the War, and was not only a driver, but an expert mechanic.

Hearing of the bitter need for help in the North-west, Miss Hasell offered her services to the Bishop of Qu'Appelle. She offered to buy a Ford motor-van, pay her own expenses out, and bring with her a companion who would also pay her expenses. The offer was gladly accepted, and so began a work which has steadily extended ever since, until to-day there are no fewer than seventeen vans in the nine western dioceses, with thirty-four women workers who in 1933 travelled in all 56,336 miles, giving help of all kinds to thousands of families, and doing work, especially for the women and children, which was beyond the power of the few clergy scattered over these enormous spaces.

Driving a van from one place to another may not sound a difficult, much less an heroic, task. The point that escapes the English reader is the fact that much of this country has no roads at all, only rough tracks through the forest, so that the driver has to steer in and out among stumps of trees and logs, over rocks, across creeks, through unending mud. The reader should also bear in mind that if anything goes wrong there is no A.A. scout handy, no

garage round the next corner, no telephone by means of which to call up assistance. Whatever damage is incurred the motorist must make good himself or herself. If it is beyond repair there is nothing for it but to walk—perhaps as far as from London to Brighton—to find help.

Where there are roads they are often so narrow that it is practically impossible to pass another vehicle if one is met. This is distinctly awkward when there is a wall of rock on one side and a sheer precipice on the other. Listen to this experience of Miss Hasell. In 1926, travelling through the Kootenay diocese, she and her companion, Miss Iris Sayle, had to climb the Cascade Mountains. The road zigzagged for fifteen miles up to the first summit, 5400 feet. It was a very hot day, and they luckily had the forethought to fill the kettle with water before starting, as well as their canvas bag. They needed every drop to refill their boiling radiator. They camped seven miles from the summit in a very lonely spot. A number of cars passed in the night. They could see their headlights.

Miss Hasell writes in one of her books:[1]

> Some prefer to drive over the mountain passes at night, because the engine keeps cool, and you are warned of an approaching car by its headlights; in daylight there is no warning at sharp corners, for you cannot hear the horn. We were glad we were not on the road two days earlier when two drunken young Americans had gone over the precipice and been nearly killed. Had we met them we might have gone over too.

On the following day the two ladies drove down to a place called Sheep Creek. The edge of the narrow, twisty road had been washed out in some places, and there had been a bad forest fire, which had burned the logs which formed the culverts.

A little later they crossed the Monashee Pass. It was bad

[1] *Canyons, Cans, and Caravans* (S.P.C.K.).

enough going up, but the descent was hair-raising. There had been heavy rain, and great stones had been washed down from the mountain and littered the road. These were too heavy to lift, so the two ladies had to roll them over the precipice. They came to a place where a quantity of mud and gravel had been washed down and had partly blocked the road. To make things worse, the edge of the road had been washed away. There was no fence or wall, nothing to prevent the van, if it once got out of hand, from toppling down into the gorge hundreds of feet below. The van had to be driven up on to the pile of scree, tilting it at a most dangerous angle. Farther down was a sharp curve where the track was so narrow that it seemed impossible to get the van round it.

Miss Hasell writes of this:

> I told Iris to get out, as I always think that one person killed is better than two. But Iris does not agree. She thinks it so much better to die together than to pick up my pieces.

On their way to take a Sunday school at Elkdale the car stuck in a mud-hole. This time a farmer came to the rescue, brought a plank, and put it under the hub. Logs were placed beneath the plank, then Miss Hasell, being, as she says, "a good, heavy weight," sat on the end of the plank. The plank, acting as a lever, began to lift the car when suddenly it slipped, and Miss Hasell went backward into the ditch, which held three feet of mud and water. When they got her out she was soaked to the skin and covered with black mud. "After that," she writes, "I scarcely felt fit to take my Sunday school."

There had been great floods that year, crops were ruined, and the people desperately poor. One woman with five children was living on one meal a day of bread and potatoes, pouring hot water over hay to make tea. There were not even any vegetables.

There was one thunderstorm after another, and they had to drive seventy miles along an apology for a road to Lonely Lake. Within two miles of their destination they came to a creek which seemed too deep for the van to pass. They had been told that the bottom was hard, but Miss Hasell thought it wise to try it. She took off shoes and stockings and waded in, and nearly stuck in deep mud. They had to leave the van and cross on a log.

During the service there came another storm, but some of the people gave them shelter for the night. They heard that there were three more school districts farther on, so, as it was impossible to take the van, they went on afoot. They were in their better clothes, with thin stockings, and the road was terrible. Caught by darkness, they lost the trail and had to steer by a star. They went through rushes higher than their heads and muskeg. Muskeg is boggy ooze, a kind of peat-mire. As you drag one foot out the other sinks in. The long grass dripped, and they came to a burned forest, where charred stumps and logs lay everywhere.

Over and over again they fell, bruising themselves terribly and getting wet to their waists. At last they heard a dog bark, but it was long past midnight when they came to the farm. They had been walking all day, and had been lost for four hours. The farmer's wife had no bed for them, so they slept on the kitchen floor, and in the morning their shoes, dried in the oven, were hard as boards.

The forest often caught fire, and once, when on their way to a place called Eagle Bay, Miss Hasell and Miss Sayle followed a narrow, stony road with a lake on one side and a forest on the other. A forest fire was raging, and the air was thick with smoke. A fire-warden met them and told them they could go on, but presently they came to a great smouldering tree lying across the track. They got out their axe, but two of the fire-fighters came and cut the log away,

and they came to the farm for which they were bound. This farm, only a couple of hours earlier, had been completely surrounded by flames, but the farmer and his men had started a back-fire, and so saved the house. Had they been away house and all must have been destroyed.

Fires have a way of starting afresh if the wind gets up. Miss Hasell knew this, and she and Miss Sayle drove back as far as they could before camping for the night. They got up very early and started again, and that was just as well, for a gale blew up, and when they looked back later the whole forest was a blazing inferno.

"Had we been caught," says Miss Hasell, "we should have had to abandon the van and jump into the lake."

It was during this tour of the Kootenay district that Miss Hasell drove fifty miles along the edge of the great Okanagan Lake. This lake has a monster greater than that of Loch Ness, which has been seen over a period of years by many people. It is a serpent-like beast, with a head resembling that of a sheep, and the Indians call it the 'ogo-pogo.' In May 1927 *Vancouver Province* published a note from its correspondent at Kelowna, B.C.:

> A school of juvenile ogo-pogos was distinctly seen off the end of Patterson Avenue by Mrs F. V. Boyle and Mr W. A. Newton. The lake is low, and at a distance of about two hundred yards these strange creatures, about three or four feet long, were seen playing around and disporting themselves. They were in two groups of five or six.

Mosquitoes are actually worse in Northern Canada than in the Tropics. Even beyond the Arctic Circle they swarm above the tundras, so that they look like smoke columns. On these great marshy flats a traveller without a net is doomed, for within an hour he is completely blinded. Farther south Miss Hasell and her companion suffered torments. In 1927 the rivers overflowed with snow-water, leaving tepid pools in which the pests bred in millions. In

the Windermere district they saw a woman gardening with a mosquito-net over her head and wearing a thick coat, though the weather was extremely hot. At many of the farms visited the people were too poor to fit their windows with screens or to buy nets, and the houses were full of mosquitoes. In one of these farm-houses the two ladies had to sit in the smoke of a smudge fire, made by piling green grass on burning embers, while they explained their mission to the farmer's wife. The kind woman gave them some tea, for which they were grateful, because, owing to the clouds of mosquitoes, it had been impossible to stop for a meal, and they had had nothing since early morning. Late that night they reached a house with fly-screens, where they had supper.

"It was like Paradise," Miss Hasell says,

> but the bliss was temporary. We went on afoot through a swamp. Mosquitoes settled all over us. We could not even open our mouths to speak. We knocked at the door of a house, knowing that the inhabitants dreaded to open it, because of the clouds that would rush in. When the door was opened we bolted in without explaining who we were or why we had come. The woman instantly sprayed us with Flit. Then at last we could interchange talk like reasonable beings.

One night they camped at the Yoko Park camping-ground, after crossing the Great Divide, the summit of the Rockies. This is forest country, and people are allowed to camp only in certain places, because of the danger of fire. It was a lovely spot, above which towered the snow-clad summits of Mount Stephen and Cathedral Mountain, each 12,000 feet high. In the grey dawn the two ladies were wakened by a clattering of pots and pans. These had been left under a ground-sheet, with a new loaf and a sack of rolled oats. They looked out, and, behold, a huge black bear with three cubs! The cubs had the bread, the mother bear the sack of oats.

Did Miss Hasell shriek or run? Not at all. She grabbed her camera and took a capital picture of the bears eating her breakfast. The ladies had to breakfast on sardines, sweet biscuits, and bottled raspberries, for there was no shop or store within many miles. Some children whom they met a little later told them how a little girl of six was coming down the mountain through the forest at dusk with a woman. When she was within a few hundred yards of her home the woman said to her, "Now you'll be all right," and turned back. Directly afterwards she heard a shriek, and saw a black bear coming directly for the child, who was paralysed with fright. Luckily the woman had a dog with her, and the dog ran at the bear and distracted its attention. Then the child's father came with a gun and shot the bear.

They found two ragged lads, brothers of fourteen and ten, living alone in a tiny log shack by the roadside. Their mother had gone, and their father had taken to drink, and they hardly ever saw him. "We're not afraid of living alone," the lads declared. "We have a gun, and there's a hole in the wall. If anyone comes at night and we don't like the look of him we shoot."

At the end of this tour they crossed the border into the States at Kingsgate. Although it was August 31, the temperature was only two degrees above freezing-point, with high wind and driving rain. They drove 114 miles into the teeth of the gale, and ended their journey nearly frozen. On the next day they came to a hill at the top of which was this curt notice: "See to your brakes, and save the flowers."

Life in the North-west is often one long struggle against extremes of weather. The summers are hot, but very short, and frost may come as early as August. At a place called Sob Lake, in the diocese of Caledonia, which Miss Hasell visited in August 1928, the day temperature was ninety

degrees, but the thermometer fell to well below freezing-point at night, and the potato crop was all blackened and destroyed.

Over a large area of Southern Saskatchewan there was no rain at all for four years. When, in April 1933, rain fell a small child of four ran to her father, calling out, "Oh, Daddy, some one is pouring water on my head!"

There were good rains that spring, and the price of grain began to rise. But later in the summer there came a plague of grasshoppers and scorching heat, which destroyed the promising wheat crop. Many of the people emigrated to the Peace river district, where there had never been a drought, and where early frost and hail are almost unknown. They arrived in covered wagons, most of them in patched overalls, some with no shoes and their feet tied up in rags. They took up Government land, cleared it, and planted wheat. The best wheat in the world is grown on the Peace river.

Then came disaster. On September 3 three inches of snow fell, with seventeen degrees of frost, and all the grain was frozen and spoiled. The worst of it was that the older settlers could not help these unfortunates. Although crops had been good for twenty years past, the low prices during the world slump had ruined most of them. Miss Hasell tells us that eggs sold for three halfpence a dozen, best butter for fivepence a pound, and chickens for threepence each. A bushel of wheat, which in 1929 had fetched four shillings and sixpence, sold three years later for tenpence.

This Athabaska diocese is six times the size of England, and has but fifteen clergy, very few railways, and in parts no roads at all, so that, even when prices are fairly good, the cost of carriage takes most of the profit. The cheap Russian wheat imported into England brought down the price of Canadian wheat, and harvesters who formerly received a pound a day and their food could get no money at all.

Those who were given work had to be satisfied with gifts in kind.

The poverty was appalling. One mother visited by Miss Hasell was unravelling some old lace to get thread to mend her clothes and those of her children. Other women were using old flour-sacks to make shirts for their husbands. Even where there were schools many children could not attend because they had no shoes or stockings and not enough clothes.

Miss Hasell visited an American woman who had come from Rhode Island with her husband and children. The man had been out of work, and as there is no dole the whole family would literally have starved to death but for the kindness of a Red Indian, who brought them moose meat and fish. The unfortunate woman was very nearly off her head. Miss Hasell arranged to get help and clothes sent to this woman, and when she visited her in the following summer she found her completely changed—quite sane again, contented, and almost happy. "The clothes you sent saved our lives," she assured Miss Hasell.

One result of all this misery has been an increase in crime, which at one time was almost unknown in these parts. Miss Hasell speaks of a Ukrainian who crept up on a man and his wife when they were asleep in bed and shot them dead for the sake of the small amount of money in the house; of another, head of a gang of roadmen, who actually taught his children to forge signatures to cheques given him by the Government to pay his men. In the old days no one ever locked their shack, for theft was unknown, but of late years things have changed for the worse.

Miss Hasell tells a story of an 'old-timer' who went to a Christmas party at the minister's house at Grande Prairie. He spent the night there with a friend. When he got home on the following evening he found that all his supplies for the rest of the winter had been stolen—about £15 worth in

all. He had worked very hard to get the money to buy them. On the earth floor of the hut were marks of hob-nailed boots, and there was only one man in the district who wore such boots. The old-timer went straight to this man's house.

"I'd like a cup of my tea and some of my sugar," he said. The man made him a cup of tea and brought out the sugar-sack. It was tied with the same bootlace with which the old-timer had fastened it. The old-timer drank his tea, then spoke.

"You can keep the things," he said. "I know you wouldn't have stolen them, except that your children were starving. I know a trade, and you don't. I'll go back to the town and earn enough to keep me till spring."

The trappers were suffering just as badly as the farmers. The competition of cheap Russian furs had knocked the bottom out of the market. Many of these trappers are half-breeds or Indians, and they are very badly off.

Miss Hasell found a great deal of Bolshevist literature in all parts of the country. There are considerable colonies of Russians and Finns in different parts of the North-west, and many are atheists—not only that, but militant atheists doing their best to spread their ideas among other nationalities. The ruin which has followed bad seasons and low prices leaves a fertile soil for their propaganda. These Communists are actively hostile to missionary work.

Yet that all Russians are not tarred with the same brush Miss Hasell had proof in Athabaska during her tour in 1933. She and her companion had an even rougher journey than usual. One very hot day they left the caravan and walked eight miles through the bush to see some settlers. The temperature was 90 degrees in the shade, and they carried heavy knapsacks. Miss Hasell says that three times in the last mile and a half they were forced to lie down, they were so tired.

As may well be imagined, the two ladies were exhausted before they got back to the caravan. They were terribly thirsty, but there was nothing to drink except water from a muddy pool full of insect life. They boiled some of this decidedly dubious liquid, and made tea, then pulled themselves together and drove twelve miles over a very bad road to give a lantern-lecture. The meeting was packed with British, Canadians, Norwegians, Swedes, and Russians, but the heat was terrible.

After tramping sixteen miles, driving twelve, and holding a meeting into the bargain, it might be supposed that Miss Hasell and her companion would have had a day off. Far from it: they drove all the next day, and late in the evening came to a dry creek with a wooden bridge over it. As they crossed the bridge gave way with a loud crash, leaving the rear wheels overhanging a five-foot drop. All they could do was take their blankets and sleep as best they might in the bush.

Early next morning they started afoot in search of help, and came across four Russians, who volunteered to help. They tried to push the caravan up, but the rotten timbers broke away, and Miss Sayle fell through the bridge. Miss Hasell was just in time to catch and pull her up; otherwise she would have broken her leg. The Russians then set to work, cut logs, and piled them below until the heavy caravan was supported. Then, with a great effort, the car was pushed into safety.

The men had been working very hard for five hours in great heat, and Miss Hasell wished to pay them for their time. They would not take a penny, yet they were so poor that one had had nothing for breakfast but dry bread and coffee made of roasted wheat. He had no winter clothes for himself or for his family. Miss Hasell squared matters later by sending each of these men a parcel of clothes.

After that the road got too bad for any wheeled vehicle.

They left the van, and during the next three weeks walked two hundred miles. The weather changed, it rained or snowed on every day, and the people were desperately poor. The ladies slept in leaky one-room shacks. In one the only dry spot was where the husband had nailed a bearskin over the roof to cover the bed where his wife and baby slept. One woman told them that she had had rheumatic fever three times; another, an elderly school teacher from England, had gone blind from worry and privation. A man said to Miss Hasell, as he surveyed his ruined crops, "I've had enough of this. I'm going to kill myself." And he would have done so had not Miss Hasell been able to stop him.

With all the cold and wet Miss Hasell got toothache. The nearest dentist was a hundred miles away, and the people recommended her to go to the horse-doctor. He was a very kind man, they said, who pulled teeth for nothing, and one described how he had knelt on a man's chest to pull out his teeth. Shuddering, Miss Hasell decided that toothache was better than a visit to the horse-doctor.

Even when the long summer treks are over Miss Hasell and her helpers are still busy. One of her chief works is the "Sunday School by Post." Lessons and books and pictures are sent out to many hundreds of children who would otherwise get no teaching of this kind at all. Some of these fine youngsters walk twenty miles to the nearest post-office to get their little parcels and to send back their written answers to the questions.

So it goes on, and year by year more Sunday schools are started, more homes visited, more of these brave, industrious settlers comforted by good words and by presents of clothes, books, and the like. It is desperately hard work, full of discomforts, yet full also of the comfortable assurance that the help given saves many from despair—even from death.

CHAPTER XII

THE LADY OF THE BLACK HORSE

Balkan Adventures of Mrs St Clair Stobart

IF women desire a share in the government of their country they should be able to take a share in its defence. It was this opinion which caused Mrs St Clair Stobart to organize the Women's Convoy Corps, of which she herself was commandant.

Members of this corps had a training similar to that of the Royal Army Medical Corps. It lasted for four years, and each year the corps went into camp and learned to pitch and strike tents, sleep on the ground, dig trenches, and do camp cooking, besides practising ambulance work.

In 1912 the first Balkan War broke out, and Mrs Stobart offered the services of her corps to Sir Frederick Treves, the well-known surgeon, who at that time was head of the British Red Cross Society. He refused, saying that there was no work fit for women in the Balkans.

Convinced that he was wrong, Mrs Stobart went out to Bulgaria with Mr (afterwards Lord) Noel Buxton, where her offer of help was gratefully accepted by the Bulgarian authorities and by Queen Eleonora. For the first time in history a unit composed of women only staffed and ran, entirely unaided, a hospital at Kirk-Kilisse, then the head-quarters of the Bulgarian Army.

Ox-carts were the only means of transport, and in these primitive conveyances the unit made its way across the rugged Rhodope Mountains and the wide plains of Thrace. For three months the hospital worked without a hitch, and when the Armistice was declared Mrs Stobart and her

colleagues received warm thanks from the Queen and the Army authorities of Bulgaria.

When the Great War broke out in August 1914 Mrs Stobart again offered her services to Sir Frederick Treves, and was again repulsed. She was told the stale old story that women surgeons were not strong enough to operate in hospitals of war or to withstand the hardships of a campaign. Once more Mrs Stobart decided to act on her own initiative, and soon found that others were less prejudiced than Sir Frederick. When she approached the Belgian Red Cross they jumped at her offer, and she was at once invited to establish a hospital at Brussels, where the fine buildings of the university were assigned to her as hospital premises.

She went out at once to make preparations, but had hardly arrived when Brussels fell. For three days and three nights the German forces poured through the city. The unfortunate Belgians stood, stunned, watching the triumphal procession of their enemies. Mrs Stobart decided to leave, and, interviewing the German General, obtained a passport for herself and her two companions—a clergyman and another Englishman who had been a judge in Burma. These three reached Hasselt, where they were arrested and brought before a German Major, who told them that they were spies, and that the fate of spies was to be shot. Mrs Stobart replied that she and her companions were engaged in hospital-work, and had papers to prove it.

The German's answer was this. We quote from Mrs Stobart's book *The Flaming Sword*.[1] "You are English, and, whether right or wrong, this is a war of annihilation." He then drove them into a bare room, with only some filthy straw on the floor, refused them food, and told the guards that if they moved or talked they were to be shot.

Happily there were Germans more civilized: influence

[1] *The Flaming Sword in Serbia and Elsewhere* (Hodder and Stoughton).

was brought to bear, and Mrs Stobart and her companions escaped alive and returned safely to England.

The rest was short. Within a very few days Mrs Stobart and her unit were at Antwerp, where a hospital was established in the Summer Concert Hall in the Rue de L'Harmonie. Maimed and wounded men were pouring in from the trenches, and there followed three weeks of strenuous work. Then again the Germans were upon them, and shells began to fall on the doomed city. Under heavy fire the women of the unit carried their wounded on stretchers to lorries, and got most of them safely away. When stretchers and lorries failed they bore them upon their backs down to the cellars in as cool a fashion, Mrs Stobart says, as though they were in a Hyde Park parade.

Belgium was finished. All but a corner of that little country was in the hands of the enemy. Mrs Stobart took her unit to Cherbourg, where every day shiploads of wounded arrived from the northern battlefields. For four months the work went on steadily, then came news that an epidemic of typhus had broken out in Serbia, that a third of all the Serbian doctors were dead, and that nursing and medical help were sorely needed. Wounded were no longer coming in such numbers to Cherbourg—the hospital there was in thorough order—and Mrs Stobart realized that a fresh call had come. In February 1915 she went back to London and saw the officials of the Serbian Relief Fund. Again her offer of help was eagerly accepted, and on April 1 the unit, with Mrs Stobart in command, sailed from Liverpool for Salonika.

The unit comprised seven women doctors, eighteen nurses, together with cooks, orderlies, chauffeurs, and interpreters—in all forty-five people. The ship in which they sailed was an old passenger-boat of only 2000 tons called the *Saidieh*. She was terribly crowded, badly found, and

poorly provisioned. The sea was rough, and submarines were believed to be waiting off the Scillies.

"At first," says Mrs Stobart dryly, "we were afraid we should be sunk; afterwards we were afraid we shouldn't."

They were not attacked: the *Saidieh* reached Salonika on April 16. This was Friday, a fast-day. No work was done. Saturday was a feast-day and a holiday. Sunday was Sunday, and Monday might normally be a working day, but was actually a day of recovery after so many holidays. Yet at last tents and stores were loaded up, and Mrs Stobart, with eleven others, forming an advance-party, found themselves on the train for Kragujevac, where the hospital was to be established. The site chosen for the hospital was the race-course, and the Serbians were both pleased and surprised to find that their offers of help to pitch tents were refused. They had never dreamed that women could be so competent.

It was heavenly spring weather: cuckoos called all day long; at night nightingales sang deliciously; yet a few hundred yards from the camp was a cemetery with four thousand newly dug graves, containing the bodies of victims of the dread typhus. And every day maimed and broken men were carried down from the battlefields in the north, until at the end of a week no fewer than one hundred and fifty patients were in this hospital under canvas.

These peasants, with small education and little knowledge of the outside world, were charming patients, declares Mrs Stobart—intelligent, humorous, courteous to their nurses, full of gratitude for any help given.

The Crown Prince Alexander came to inspect, and wrote a page and a half in the hospital book, expressing his appreciation of all that was being done. He had sun-shelters built, arbours, called *ladniaks*, made of young trees and branches. Other Serbians brought flowering plants

and planted little gardens in front of the tents. The convalescents made music in the evenings, and danced the Serbian national dance, the Kolo.

Suddenly Mrs Stobart went down with fever. It was not the dreaded typhus, but its less fatal cousin, typhoid. She had been in bed for a week when there came a familiar whirring sound, followed by a terrific crash. Enemy 'planes were overhead. Ill as she was, Mrs Stobart jumped out of bed. Clouds of smoke and dust were rising from the town. Bombs were falling. Two dropped quite close to the camp, but none of the staff were hurt. The 'planes flew away, and Mrs Stobart went back to bed. She ought to have died: instead she got better. The Taubes came a second and a third time, but on the last occasion had a hot reception, and one was hit and fell, a comet of fire.

Although every possible precaution was taken, no fewer than seventeen women of the unit went down with typhoid, and three died. Among these three was Mrs Dearmer, wife of Dr Dearmer, beloved by all in the camp.

Disease was rampant in Serbia. Not only typhus, but diphtheria, smallpox, tuberculosis, and other maladies. All the doctors were at the Front, so Mrs Stobart started a roadside dispensary, and within a few weeks no fewer than 12,000 patients were treated. Some came in ox-wagons from fifty, sixty, even seventy, miles away. With the help of the Serbian Relief Fund six other dispensaries were opened, and it is no exaggeration to say that thousands of lives were saved. The people were utterly ignorant of the dangers of infection, and it was most difficult to make them understand. Friends would come and sit on the beds of smallpox patients, then go home and rejoin their families.

September came, and the autumn frosts were tinting the leaves when Colonel Guentchitch, head of the Serbian Army Medical Department, told Mrs Stobart that the situation was serious, and asked her if she would form a flying field

hospital to accompany the Army at the Front. She agreed, and was placed in command of the column, with the rank of major.

"This is, I believe," the Colonel said, "the first time in history that such an appointment has been offered to a woman, but we know you can do it. We will see that no harm comes to your hospital here."

Two doctors, five nurses, together with orderlies, chauffeurs, a cook, interpreters, and a secretary, were chosen, and on September 27 everything was packed and ready for the start. Sixty soldiers were detailed to serve with the column, and were told that Mrs Stobart was in supreme command. Before a start could be made the camp was attacked by enemy 'planes, and damage done to tents and stores by a bomb which fell in the very middle of them. Again the staff escaped, and on the next day the unit left for the Front. They had six Ford lorries, thirty wagons, and field-kitchens on wheels.

They found themselves at Pirot, near the Bulgarian frontier. In the beginning, the Serbians advanced, and on the first day Mrs Stobart, riding her black horse, was in the saddle for sixteen hours. The roads were atrocious, the congestion terrible, and as halts were few and far between it was impossible to do any cooking. Also it rained. When at last, long after dark, they halted the ground was a swamp: it was impossible to pitch tents, and the members of the unit had to sleep in the cars.

In spite of her long day's ride Mrs Stobart was up at half-past three on the next morning, and on that second day rode again for sixteen hours in pouring rain, reaching the town of Knjazevac at nine that night. There a hot meal was ready in a restaurant, but the party had again to sleep in the cars, which were parked in the public square. For three months on end from that date Mrs Stobart and most of her doctors and nurses had to sleep in their day clothes.

Most of the time they were wet, while if they got more than five hours' sleep on any night they were fortunate. The marvel is that human beings could undergo such hardships without collapsing.

To begin with Mrs Stobart had much trouble with her Serbian soldiers. They were kindly, decent fellows, but slack. They would tether the horses on barren ground, neglect to fetch hay for the oxen; they were careless about their own food, and had to be driven to light fires and cook. And while Mrs Stobart herself was up long before daybreak the men would sleep till the last minute and delay the start.

The unit reached Nish, from which town they were to go to the Front by rail. At the last minute the trucks were found to be too small to hold the cars. Mrs Stobart, always resourceful, set her chauffeurs to work, who hacked away the barriers and got the cars safely aboard. Just as the train was about to start there were shouts of horror. A sheet of flame rose from a truck on which was loaded one of the cars and some barrels of petrol. Every one rushed to the spot, and by desperate efforts the fire was beaten out before it reached the petrol.

Reaching Palanka, news came that the Serbian division of 25,000 men was confronted by 100,000 Austrians and Germans under Von Mackensen. Streams of wounded poured in. Rain fell all day and all night, it was bitterly cold, and presently crowds of refugees—men, women, and children—were pouring down the roads. The great retreat had begun. Not merely an army but a whole nation was flying before the overwhelming weight of invasion.

Famine threatened, and the Principal Medical Officer told Mrs Stobart that he calculated that at least half a million unoffending peasants would die of starvation. Actually this proved to be an underestimate.

Now for the first time the roaring of guns became terrific. Palanka had been evacuated, and Mrs Stobart and her

people retreated a few miles to Ratcha. The roads were packed with refugees, and the surface, churned by the feet of thousands of cattle, was in a terrible condition, deep in slime and mire.

The Germans were in Palanka, and it was time to move, but just then a batch of fifty wounded were brought in. It was midnight before a start could be made, and the column moved down a terrible road full of deep holes, with broken bridges. Again and again the wounded had to be lifted out of the ambulances and carried across danger-spots. The cars stuck and were shifted or pushed by sheer muscle-power out of mud-holes, while every now and then a wagon would overturn and block the road. Towards morning Mrs Stobart found herself again and again falling asleep in the saddle.

Two hours' rest; then on again. Rain pouring down, and, as they passed through the village of Batuchini, enemy shells falling close. So it went on day after day, life one long struggle to force a way through seas of mud, the enemy constantly pressing behind, big guns flashing and thundering day and night. And always mud-holes, boulders, fallen trees, precipices, broken bridges.

Surrounded on three sides, the Serbian Army was driven back into the barren hills of Montenegro. And not only the Army, but the nation. Women, weary, hungry, foot-sore, struggled past, leading ox-carts crammed with children or old folk. Once Mrs Stobart saw a tiny boy leading two calves, which drew a little cart in which was another boy too small to walk.

On the evening of November 7 Mrs Stobart's column left Kupçi for Blatzi. The only way was through a narrow pass, and she had been told that the enemy were trying to draw a net round the Serbian Army and capture or annihilate it. The road was bordered on one side by high cliffs, on the other by the Raçina river roaring down in flood.

The mud in places was two feet deep, and if a wagon stuck it held up the procession for miles.

"Go on! Hurry up! Get out of the way"—these were the cries constantly heard, but above them was the constant thunder of the guns. All that night, all the next day, they journeyed without stop, then, after twenty-five hours' continuous travelling, bivouacked at last. There still remained the second part of the defile, however. On the next day this was passed, and before midnight they arrived at Blatzi.

The enemy were still on their heels, and now they were in the mountains, where the cold was intense, and a snow blizzard added to their miseries. The sufferings of the animals were heartrending. Horses and oxen, utterly exhausted and half starved, would fall and be beaten until they struggled to their feet or died. There was little food for men and women, even less for the unfortunate beasts.

Roads gave out altogether. On Wednesday, November 24, Mrs Stobart, with her lorries and ox-carts, struggled all day through ploughed fields, oak scrub, and beech-woods. No road anywhere! They stopped on top of a hill to give the animals a little rest, and when they wished to start again found their way blocked by thousands of wagons streaming in from east to west. From the 22nd to the 25th Mrs Stobart herself travelled continuously, with only short halts for food. For eighty-one hours she had neither sleep nor rest, and sometimes found herself dozing off in the middle of a sentence.

"Then," she writes, "I had to try and tack on the interrupted words correctly to the next sentence, and I don't feel sure they always fitted."

At a place called Dresnik they found a dry camping-ground, and slept in tents for the first time, and the last, for many weeks.

On the following day the struggle began again through bogs covered with snow, mud-banks, and half-frozen rivers.

They came to the river Drin, over which was one narrow bridge, with no fewer than five thousand wagons waiting to cross. "The din," says Mrs Stobart, "was like that of a thousand furious football crowds." At every bridge the column was blocked for hours.

The cold grew more and more intense, and an icy wind blew across the bleak heights. At one village the Prefect gave Mrs Stobart a glass of warm milk, which, she says, "I gulped like a greedy puppy."

At Pech they camped, but found hardly any firewood. The cold was so intense that their boots were frozen stiff, and had to be thawed before they could put them on in the morning. Mrs Stobart had no gloves, her hands were numbed, but she managed to buy a pair of short white woollen socks, which, though clumsy, proved useful.

The fugitives were now among the great mountains of Montenegro, and, owing to the steepness of the ways and the reduced numbers of oxen, it was necessary to cut down the wagons, turning them into two-wheeled carts, and leave the cars behind. Nearly all the hospital equipment had to be abandoned. Tents, beds, the last relics of comfort, were burned in order to save them from the enemy, who still pressed in pursuit, and on December 3 the fugitives climbed into the heart of the barren Black Mountains over passes 5000 feet high. One place was so steep and slippery that Mrs Stobart's horse fell, and she and it together rolled for nearly a hundred yards. "We picked ourselves up, looked at each other and walked on," she writes. "There was no one to say, 'Poor dear, are you hurt?' so it wasn't worth while to be hurt."

So day after day the interminable, nightmare struggle against ice and snow continued, until Mrs Stobart found herself actually regretting the seas of mud which had seemed so terrible during the first part of the retreat. The food question became more and more difficult. They had said

good-bye to butter, jam, milk, sugar, biscuits, long ago, and long outgrown the absurd habit of thinking it necessary to take nourishment every two or three hours. A piece of coarse maize bread had become a luxury. Mrs Stobart paid as much as thirty dinars (18*s.*) for a single loaf.

On Thursday, December 16, at two o'clock came a break in the wilderness of rocks, and beneath was an open plain, and in the distance the town of Podgorica. Hope at last, but there were still five days of desperate struggle through mud, thunderstorms, and floods, with water at times up to the saddle-girths, before Scutari was reached.

"I am not a military expert," Mrs Stobart writes,

> but I cannot help believing that the retreat of our division, as well as that of the whole Army, had been from beginning to end marvellously handled. To retreat during three months, fighting rearguard actions all the time, in circumstances which could scarcely have been more difficult, and to have saved the Army and its *moral*, was a great performance.

Yes, a great performance—but what shall we say about Mrs Stobart's part in this terrible retreat? As an example of physical endurance her feat is unequalled. When we add that hers was the only detachment from which not one soldier deserted we have proof of mental and moral power equalling the physical.

Twenty years have passed since the tremendous episode we have briefly described, and to-day Mrs St Clair Stobart is still actively working for the good of humanity, as may be discovered by any who visit her London headquarters at the Grotrian Hall in Wigmore Street.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEDICINE WOMAN

How Evelyn Cheesman walks in Wild Places

FOR a man to have done what Miss Cheesman has done would have been remarkable. It is amazing that a woman should have gone to these wild places to do what she has done, and then think nothing of it."

These are the words of Dr Ivens, of the Melanesian Mission. As he has spent twenty years or more in these wildest islands of the South Seas his opinion is worth recording.

Miss Evelyn Cheesman, who is a sister of Major Cheesman, well known for his explorations in Arabia and Abyssinia, has devoted her life to the study of tropical insects, and for that purpose has spent much time in the islands of the Pacific. One of her favourite hunting-grounds has been the New Hebrides, a group of islands where wild volcanoes flare to the skies and still wilder savages collect the heads of their enemies and devour their bodies.

Of these islands that with the worst reputation is Malekula, both for its savages and its climate. Miss Cheesman spent more than a year there, most of the time quite alone, and not only kept her health, but never had any shadow of trouble with the natives.

Malekula is a good-sized island, being forty-six miles long and twenty-six wide. In the centre mountains rise to several thousand feet. The climate is intensely hot, and for most of the year the temperature varies between 84 and 98 degrees. Even the natives feel the heat, for, as one boy said to Miss Cheesman during a long tramp through the bush, "Big fellar sun too much." Not only is it hot, but

the air steams with moisture, so that the whole island is covered with bush of almost impenetrable thickness. There is much malaria and that most terrible of tropical diseases, blackwater fever.

The only method of getting about is by bush trails, very narrow, and so winding that it may take five or six hours to reach a spot only three miles inland. The coast tribes have been civilized to some extent by contact with whites, but the bush folk are still quite primitive. They are dying off rapidly, owing to the scourge of influenza, the germs of which were, of course, originally imported by white visitors.

Like most Stone Age savages, these bush people are intensely superstitious. Miss Cheesman ascribes her safety to the fact that she happened to earn a reputation for being a "kind of super bush-devil." This is how it began. She was staying with missionaries on Atchin, a little island off the north-east coast of Malekula, and went daily to the mainland with a mission boy to collect specimens round a small lake in the bush.

One morning she found a native there, keeping guard with a gun. It appeared that one of his relatives had been killed by a hill-man on the previous day. The native was hostile to the mission boy, so Miss Cheesman sent the latter home and went on with her work alone. But, needing a guide, she employed a native from one of the mainland villages. This boy was supposed to be mad, and, in a fit of frenzy, had murdered another man. At the time Miss Cheesman was quite unaware of his character, but by taking him she began to build up a reputation for being immune from the bad spirits which are supposed to haunt the bush. Her fearlessness and the nature of her work, which was, of course, a complete puzzle to the natives, added to her fame. They could only imagine that the queer creatures she collected must be needed for some form of sorcery.

The danger was very real. The whole of the north part of the island is owned by two cannibal tribes, known as the Big Nambas and the Small Nambas. Only a few years before Miss Cheesman's visit the Big Nambas had murdered a recruiter who had kidnapped two of their boys. With deadly patience they had waited for him for twelve years.

There were three Nambas converts at the mission, who accompanied Miss Cheesman on her expeditions. One day, when following up a small river, they stopped and begged her not to go farther, as she would be killed and eaten. They actually had tears in their eyes. But Miss Cheesman had learned from one of the natives that a *tambu* had been set upon her. In native phrase, she had been 'given a name.' This meant that her person was sacred. In the end she collected specimens all through the territory of the Big Nambas, and became friendly with their king, Ringapat. Ringapat had a large number of wives and children, and treated his wives much better than is the habit of most savage chieftains. The women, however, were very shy of Miss Cheesman, and would invariably hide in the bush as she passed. But some of the children were friendly, and one toddler, named Neddenvel, was quite fearless.

Ringapat was opposed to cannibalism, and had substituted pork for human flesh at the festivals of initiation of the boys of the tribe. He told Miss Cheesman, however, that he could never wipe out the practice until certain of his old chiefs were dead. They would not give it up. The idea behind the eating of your dead enemy was the fear of the spirit of the murdered man, which would walk the earth and bring harm upon the killer or his tribe. If, however, the body was cut up and eaten by several different people the spirit ceased to exist. Miss Cheesman was shown a heavy wooden knife used for the purpose of cutting up the bodies of the slain. She was treated as a guest of honour

and lodged in the royal yam shed. Before she left King Ringapat gave her a message for King George. She wrote it down.

> Ringapat, King of the Big Nambas, wishes King George to know that he will never eat man's flesh, white man or black boy; that he will never kill man, either white man or black boy; and that he will be good to all white men so long as they are good to his boys and do not steal them.

He then selected two presents for King George—some black and white beads made of shell and coconut and a carved spear that had been in his family for generations. On Miss Cheesman's return to England his Majesty graciously accepted both the message and the present.

Miss Cheesman had to be very careful to observe the *tambu* ordinances or superstitions of the natives. At one village she offended by examining a ratskin hung up against a tree. This, for some unknown reason, happened to be *tambu*. At another place was a spring from which her boys could bring water, but at which all women were forbidden to look.

In some of the Melanesian islands there are cattle in a semi-wild condition. As a rule these keep away from man, but they are very inquisitive, and sometimes Miss Cheesman, busy at her work, would find herself the centre of a circle of these animals, snorting and staring at her butterfly-net. At such times she had to be extremely careful, for any rash movement, let alone a shout, might result in a wild charge, and since these herds number fifty or sixty the result would have been serious.

In Melanesia pigs are fairly plentiful, but are so hunted by the natives that they bolt at sight or scent of humanity. In Tahiti the case is different. Here, too, pigs are plentiful, but in the interior of that large island, with its great mountains and deep canyons, domesticated pigs have gone wild

—'bush,' as they call it—and in these lonely recesses the boars have attained a prodigious size and are very savage. Some become notorious characters, and practically own large stretches of forest, which are avoided by the natives.

These creatures are really dangerous, for, while a sow and her litter will run, the boar stands his ground and charges on sight. Then he must be killed outright, for wounding will merely cause him to become more savage. The only alternative is to climb a tree, always supposing there is one available, and trust to being able to hang on until the boar's patience is exhausted.

On one occasion Miss Cheesman had a bad fright. Her guide had failed her, so she went inland alone, and became so absorbed in her work that she forgot everything else. She was climbing on all fours up a crag covered in trees when suddenly she came upon the fresh spoor of an enormous boar. It flashed upon her that her host had been telling her only the previous evening of a particularly huge and savage boar which had killed a chief.

"I clambered down that crag," she writes,

> inch by inch, trying to be as noiseless as possible. The wind was blowing from the other side, which was comforting, for the spoor followed a trail around the crag. . . . At the foot was a small stream, and, walking in the bed without realizing the direction, I came round to the other side of the crag, and there, behold, were the giant spoor again.

She turned back in a hurry, and luckily found another brook, down which she waded. If she had come face to face with that boar, either on the crag or in the stream, the situation would have been desperate, for there was no tree to climb, and her only weapon was the machete, or cutlass, which she used for clearing a path through the bush.

Apart from these pigs, there are no large wild animals on the islands. They and the risk of breaking a *tambu* of

one of the bush tribes are the two chief dangers of the explorer or collector, but there is a third which may end just as fatally as either of the others. This is getting lost. Miss Cheesman has had more than one experience of this kind.

One was on the eastern side of Tahiti. She had mapped a day's work, and started early, but the boy who was to show her the way was not to be found. The slopes near the coast had been burned off recently, and Miss Cheesman anticipated no trouble in finding her way. Soon she was in the bush and climbing. The higher she climbed the thicker grew the bush, and there were no open spaces. Even the crests of the ridges were covered with thick pandanus, while the hillsides were one mass of trees, ferns, and climbing plants of a hundred kinds. There was water everywhere, tinkling in little streams down the slopes. And these slopes —there was no disguising it—were terribly steep. In fact, in many places they were sheer cliff.

Miss Cheesman kept along the ridges, and it was slow and hard work. Pandanus-leaves have sword-like tips and saw-like edges, while their tough trunks are covered with thorns. She came to a heart-shaped valley, a basin filled with lovely vegetation, but the sides were far too steep to climb. Oddly enough there was no insect life in the valley-heads, so in the middle of the afternoon she gave up and made back along the ridge by which she had come. After she had been walking for twenty minutes the ridge came to an abrupt end, and she found herself on the edge of a steep cliff.

This puzzled her greatly, because she had consulted her compass, and knew that she was travelling in the right direction. It must, however, have been the wrong ridge. She went back to her starting-point and tried again. The result was the same. She tried a third time, and again found herself faced with a sheer descent.

Miss Cheesman then climbed the highest tree she could find, but still could see only precipices. Once more she went back and tried another ridge. These ridges, remember, were all covered with scrub higher than a man's head, so that it was impossible to see where they trended until a break occurred. When she came to the end of this one she found that she had made a semicircle and was again looking down into the valley.

She saw a group of exceptionally tall trees on a parallel ridge and made for them. To reach them she had to cross a gully and haul herself up the opposite steep by roots and branches, all the time waist-deep in thick fern. Gaining the trees, she climbed the highest, and from it obtained a view of the sea. But the view was not reassuring. The ground looked very difficult, and the scrub worse than ever, because it was laced with the wiry stems of ferns. With an unpleasant shock she realized that it would be dark in little more than an hour.

The idea of waiting all night in that horrible scrub was unendurable. For one thing she would be soaked to the skin by the heavy dew. There seemed but one thing to do: find a stream and follow it down to the sea.

She reached a stream and followed it a little way, only to find that it dropped in a cascade over a sheer wall of rock thirty feet in height. Miss Cheesman clambered out of its bed over a ridge, and found another brook smaller than the first. For a little way the bed was level, then came the inevitable cascade, but here were bushes by which she might lower herself. She got half-way down, the bushes gave out, and she found herself twelve feet above a pool. In desperation she dragged loose a length of a creeper known as ie-ie and began to climb down. Her foot slipped, the creeper snapped, and she plopped into the pool neck-deep in water, hitting her back sharply against a rock and skinning both her elbows. Then the sun went down.

There is no twilight in these latitudes, and Miss Cheesman just had time to find a fallen tree and settle herself upon it before darkness fell.

Sleep was out of the question. Although the night was warm she was soaked and shivering. Besides, she was so bruised and sore, not only from her fall, but from her long scramble and the exertion of desperate climbing, that she had constantly to get up, stand, then sit and find a new position. Her teeth chattered, but by degrees her clothes began to dry, and she felt a little less miserable.

Then a curious thing happened. The slope behind the trees began to light up with great patches of phosphorescence. These were not caused by fireflies or insects, but were formed by leaves and twigs.

At half-past one the moon rose, giving light enough to allow Miss Cheesman to move and gather leaves and branches to make a softer couch for her sore body.

Day dawned at last, but the sunlight gave no encouragement. Miss Cheesman found herself perched like a fly on a prostrate trunk in the middle of a precipice. Her brook dropped away down a terribly steep slide of rock into a larger one a long way below—so far below that big trees at the bottom resembled posies stuck on the rocks.

There was no going back. Worn and aching as she was, Miss Cheesman had to climb down that tremendous descent. It was covered with small guava-bushes, which seemed likely to give hand-holds, but the first came up by the roots, and she started sliding, apparently to the bottom. In the nick of time she managed to grasp a second, which, very fortunately, held. She looked for fruit, but there was none. Her last meal had been bread and bananas at noon on the previous day, yet, she says, she did not feel particularly hungry.

At last she gained the bottom of the great slope, and found a real river. It was swift, with deep pools and

swirling currents. It turned out, Miss Cheesman writes, to be "quite a good stream," but there were no fewer than seven cascades before it reached the sea, and several times she began to think miserably that she must retrace her steps. One of these cascades had a large, deep swirling pool beneath it. In order to avoid this she had to climb a perpendicular bank, crawl along it inch by inch for about three hundred feet, and very carefully lower herself again into the stream farther down.

The river was very beautiful, with great rocks soaring skyward on either side and the early sunlight reflected on its shining pools, but Miss Cheesman had few thoughts for the scenery: her mind was on the cataracts. The roar of one was hardly out of her ears before there came the thunder of the next.

Suddenly the gorge opened, showing a vanilla plantation and orange-trees. She picked up an orange—"without exception the most wonderful fruit that ever grew."

It was just noon when Miss Cheesman limped into the chief's house, to find that he had spent a very anxious night, and had ordered the whole village to turn out and search if his guest had not returned by midday. Most women who had been through what Miss Cheesman had survived would have gone straight to bed. Instead she sat down to a table heaped with eggs, chicken, vegetables, and fruit, and enjoyed an excellent breakfast.

Miss Cheesman has been forced to tread delicately in many places in her pursuit of insects, and has more than once known what it means to hang with both hands to some root or branch, with her body dangling over the rim of some deep ravine. Yet the most dangerous adventure of the kind which ever befell her was when she was in search, not of beetles, but of beauty.

In 1924 she accompanied the St George Expedition to the Pacific as entomologist, and they came to the Marquesas

Islands. These are a volcanic group in Polynesia which form a French protectorate, and are the most beautiful islands in the Pacific—perhaps in all the world. The tremendous cliffs that rise sheer from the intensely blue sea resemble polished marble. In some places they are as bare as marble, in others cut into terraces, on which grow belts of exquisite verdure, the bushes covered with flowers, pink, cream, and red, while graceful tree-ferns swing in the sea-breeze. From the lofty crests tumble veils of snowy foam, for the rainfall is heavy during part of the year, and small streams break out everywhere.

Studying the French charts of these islands, Miss Cheesman was puzzled by noticing that the term *le désert* occurred more than once in the interior, and her curiosity was piqued by the suggestion that there could be anything approaching a desert on one of these gems of the ocean.

The party spent a few days on each of four of the islands, then arrived at Nukahiva, which is the largest of the group. They anchored in a sheltered bay towards sunset, and the evening light fell upon a small plateau high among the hills, which had a yellow sheen and was apparently quite bare of vegetation. On the following day Miss Cheesman climbed to it—a very stiff scramble, much of it through dense and very thorny scrub. Presently she and her guide came out of the scrub on to a rolling upland of coarse grass, with a few half-wild ponies grazing on it. The scrub completely surrounded yet did not encroach upon the plateau, and this delightful stretch of park-like land was a Marquesan 'desert.'

It fascinated Miss Cheesman, who, learning that there was a much larger desert area above Hakaui, which was the yacht's next port of call, decided, if possible, to visit it. In order to make sure of time for her visit she made up her mind to walk over the hills to Hakaui, and so arrive there a day ahead of the yacht.

She started at seven in the morning, alone, and her

description of that walk over those lovely hills, with the air ringing with bird-song and the clear streams where giant arums provided readymade drinking-cups, fills the reader with envious joy. The distance was eight miles as the crow flies, but twelve by the trail, which ended in zigzag bends down the face of a grassy precipice which led to a native village by the sea. Here she sat with the chief, who knew no English and little French, yet managed to tell her that there was no way out of the head of the valley to the 'desert,' and no way up the cliffs on that side.

Miss Cheesman, however, is a lady who does not readily accept defeat. She strolled out and looked at the cliffs. They certainly were very high, so high that white clouds tumbled along their crests like balls of wool. The face showed lines of different rock strata, and here and there was a tree or a bush. The crest was a smooth wall of rock, with only one gap, in which grew a little tree. If that gap could be reached the climber could go over the top, but not otherwise.

Miss Cheesman stood at the foot of the immense wall of rock, and with her finger traced a possible path from one ledge to another. Some native women from the village stood by, much interested. They nodded one to another as the finger scaled the cliff and pointed at last to the little gap at the summit. The difficulty was that not one of them spoke a word of English, but by means of signs Miss Cheesman learned from them that the cliff had been climbed. One man had done it.

Miss Cheesman went back to the chief. Yes, a man had once climbed the cliff, but only one. Certainly no woman could do it. The attempt was madness. Miss Cheesman merely smiled, went again to the beach, and spent the time until sunset in studying the face, the ledges, and the way from one ledge to another. At a quarter to five on the next morning she had started out.

At the foot was a belt of intensely thick and thorny scrub, and before she had got through it Miss Cheesman had lost much of her clothing and some of her skin. For a description of the climb we cannot do better than quote her own modest words, taken from her book *Hunting Insects in the Southern Seas*.[1]

> It was strenuous work, pulling oneself on to a ledge, then clawing a way on all fours to the next. With every yard it became more difficult, but I could not think of turning back. About half-way up a small clump of bushes gave me sufficient confidence of support to allow a few minutes for looking back at the way I had come. The first belt of scrub had diminished to toy trees; the huts of the village were difficult to locate, and groups of tiny black dots represented the inhabitants. I wondered idly what had caused so many of them to congregate, and supposed the yacht must be in sight, until it dawned on me that they had come out to watch a small speck climbing the cliff.
>
> Some goats were very helpful on the last hundred yards; they appeared from nowhere just as I despaired of finding a way, and passed along in front of me until they leaped through the cleft at the top. I followed them circumspectly along ledges which were not the breadth of my shoe; but being in view of the final gap buoyed one up for the last effort. I could have embraced that little tree, which turned out to be nearly full-grown; but, being a pandanus with a thorny stem, it did not invite familiarities—so I swung myself through the gap.

That cliff was 1600 feet in height, and the climb took no less than five hours. At the summit the wind blew fresh and strong, and Miss Cheesman sat in the shade of a casuarina and watched two billy-goats fighting. She was intensely thirsty, and to her dismay found that the limes which she had collected on the previous evening had been left behind. There was little chance of finding water at this height. She walked along the ridge for three miles, and at

[1] Philip Allan.

the roots of a tree found a little muddy water, but it did not do much to alleviate her thirst. Indeed, it rather increased the aching of her throat.

So at last she came to her 'desert,' a grassy plateau ringed with dense and lofty scrub, like the one she had already seen, but on a far larger scale.

To her left she saw a long gully stretching down to the sea. The bottom showed brilliantly green, a pleasant contrast to the uplands, which were dry and parched by the strong wind. There were bushes, and it looked as if there were a stream at the bottom of the gully. Since by this time she was painfully thirsty Miss Cheesman decided to go down, get a drink, then attempt to scramble up the far side.

"Had I only known," she writes, "what lay before me I would never have ventured into that gully, but would have cheerfully put up with any amount of pains in my throat."

The slope was dry, very steep, and very slippery, so that it was more a matter of sliding than climbing to descend it. The gully was also very much deeper than Miss Cheesman had supposed, but it was not until she came near to the green foliage that she realized that what she had taken for bushes were actually the tops of quite large trees, the trunks of which were out of sight far below. And the green which she had believed to be grass turned out to be the heads of tall bamboos.

The shock was terrifying, for obviously she was close to the edge of a precipice. She tried to stop and turn, but it was too late, her feet shot from under her, and she slid over dry fern, which gave no hand-hold, into a deep hollow. This was thickly grown with cane, which closed over her head, leaving her almost in darkness. The bottom of the hollow was greasy clay, in which she could get no footing. She continued to slide. She clutched at reeds, which came

up by the roots; she tried to roll to one side, but the vegetation seemed to push her back into the bottom of the trough.

"Then at last," she writes,

> I came to a stop, with my hands grasping two fistfuls of bracken—and not a second too soon, for I was more than three-quarters over a shiny wall of rock, down which trickled water to form a small stream some thirty feet below.

There she hung, dazed, dully waiting for the end, for she could not believe that the bracken would hold. The thought that hammered in her brain was that she would not be killed at once, but would take a long time to die. It was, of course, out of the question that her friends would ever find her, or even her bones.

How long she hung there she does not know, but she thinks it must have been for nearly half an hour. For the time she felt as if paralysed. But this passed, the love of life rose again strongly within her, and she felt able to move once more.

"I set my teeth," she writes,

> and dug the fingers of one hand among the bracken roots, holding on to them while I moved the other hand backward, two fingers at a time, until I gripped more bracken-stems and could at last lean back and take breath.

The bracken held, she gained ground, and at last managed to get a grasp on the stems of a guava-bush and pull herself to safety. Then it is not to be wondered that the reaction brought on a violent attack of sickness.

When she recovered she had to climb all the way back out of the gully, walk the three miles back along the gale-swept ridge, and descend that tremendous cliff up which it had taken her five hours to climb. This, in her book, she dismisses in a few words, merely saying that it was accomplished very slowly by going backward on all fours. It is

fitting to end this chapter with her own reflections on her perilous adventure:

> And yet one must consider that such adventures do not have negative results, for, after all, they are experiences—although in this case a vastly disagreeable one. Looking back upon it from this distance of time, I know quite well that it was far better to have gone through it rather than have left the island without finding out anything about the desert and have regretted the lost opportunity for ever after.

Besides her work in the South Seas and the more northern islands of the Pacific, Miss Cheesman has visited the little-known Galapagos Islands, off the north-west coast of the South American continent, and has spent twelve months in the interior of New Guinea. For this latter expedition she had a grant from the Trustees of the British Museum, and she actually brought home no fewer than 42,000 insects, besides other scientific material.

New Guinea is very rich in insect life, which has as yet been only partially studied. Many of the insects she captured were previously unknown to science; others were rare and interesting. Among these were horned flies, very large cockroaches, and a small mole-cricket. She discovered two species of *Coprinae* (dung-beetles), which made ovoids of rotten fruit, instead of animal droppings. Her collection included terrestrial and fresh-water molluscs, annelid worms, parasitic worms, leeches, spiders, centipedes, and millipedes. Besides all these, she collected small mammals, frogs, and other reptiles, and discovered a new variety of fish.

It was in New Guinea that she beat her own record, and, perhaps, all other records of the kind, by taking 744 moths between seven o'clock in the evening and one o'clock on the following morning. Every killing-bottle she had was full.

Insects are of as great consequence to man as any other form of life. They are, indeed, his principal enemy, for if unchecked insect pests might in the end destroy his food-supplies. Thus, knowledge of the many thousands of different species, their habits, habitations, food, and manner of life, is essential to mankind, and the debt which we all owe to entomologists such as Miss Cheesman is very deep and real.

CHAPTER XIV

TURNING THE 'DARK CONTINENT' INTO THE 'LIGHT'

The Story of Mrs Patrick Ness's Travels in Africa

JUST over a century ago—in 1830, to be precise—a certain organization known as the Geographical Society was founded in London. It speedily became famous as the headquarters in England of all the most distinguished explorers of the nineteenth century—but women were not admitted to membership. Captain Speke, who discovered the Nile, and who had been vastly impressed by the adventures of three Dutch ladies in the Sudan, did suggest their admission, it is true, but the idea found no favour. Sixty years went by before fifteen women were elected as Fellows of the Society, among them the noted Mrs Bishop (Isabella Bird), the traveller in Central Asia, but the storm of protest raised at the daring innovation was so tremendous that twenty years more passed by without the admission of a single other woman, in spite of the courageous explorations of Mary Kingsley before the close of the century.

A hundred years after the founding of the organization—now the *Royal* Geographical Society—another innovation was introduced in keeping with the whole change of feeling that the new century had brought, and a woman was elected to the Council itself. The woman was Mrs Patrick Ness, a traveller in the remoter parts of Africa since the year 1906, whose journeys and expeditions had been carried through with a quiet success.

Mrs Ness, like all born travellers who voluntarily forsake the comforts of civilization for the wilds, is constantly

attracted by the fascination of the unknown. But she has approached her journeys very much from the practical point of view, too. The twentieth century is opening up the world in a degree which never before seemed possible. Roadmaking is one of the features of the modern, as well as the Roman, economy, but it is merely one feature. The retreat of the jungle before the aeroplane, the railway, and the motor-car is achieved more rapidly than before whole centuries of attack by fire and sword and nations. But the human element is still necessary—pioneers to go ahead and to explore and to map out the routes, to test them when made, to report their practicability under all conditions, so that one more slice of the world can be utilized without danger and either for pleasure or profit or both by the new populations being born every second.

Pioneering, even shorn of the sensational stories, the hair-raising adventures, and narrow escapes that Mrs Ness disclaims, is by no means a simple or an easy occupation. Few folk would voluntarily choose the utter solitude that it necessitates, or could bear the sense of isolation, of being separated from one's own kind and the utter lack even of communication with them, that travelling in distant places of the world entails. To a normal person these considerations must always remain on the debit side of the account, and to place on the credit side something to balance them one must possess a temperament capable of finding delight and satisfaction in the discoveries that each new day may bring.

Other practical qualities are obviously necessary for the sort of journeys that Mrs Ness has to her credit—a calm and level head, indomitable persistence, organizing power. But a distinguished gentleman belonging to a learned society added another "without which it is difficult to get on in West Africa," he stated firmly—and that is a sense of humour!

Fifty countries have been included in Mrs Ness's travels; to deal with her experiences in all of them would manifestly be impossible in a short chapter, which, because Africa is her favourite country, shall be confined to Africa.

Kenya Colony is a post-War name. Before 1920, when it was thus christened, it was vaguely known as British East Africa, and hardly anybody went there but officials. But in the early days of this country Mrs Ness accompanied her husband thither on the first of their big-game expeditions. Actually she did not shoot, and has never shot, animals herself, but she used to watch them, and find endless interest in learning about their habits and ways.

They were to start from Nairobi, now the popular capital, but seldom ever heard of in those days, for it was very much in the pioneering stage. There was the Uganda railway, it is true, but the trains almost ambled along, enabling the guard, when he wished, to shoot from his van, then stop the train while he got off and picked up the result.

Unfortunately their arrangements for the shoot were ended by news which necessitated their immediate return to England, but they came back to them in 1908. On this occasion they were joined by a friend, and gathered together the vast tribe of servants that was then necessary for such expeditions, which in those days, it must be remembered, were very much 'up-country.' They hired ninety porters, and all the gun-bearers, syces, cooks, and boys necessary besides. It was a motley contingent that finally assembled, clad principally in cast-off European clothing, so beloved of the natives. Mrs Ness remembers one in particular with a rusty frock coat drawn over a collection of pots and pans kept in place by a waist-string.

No native who knew the country out beyond the Sotik plains could be found to act as guide, and the maps available were of the most sketchy description. They had therefore to travel by compass, trusting to luck to find water to camp

by at night. But the more detailed side of this *safari* life, as it is called, you will find in Mrs Ness's book *Ten Thousand Miles in Two Continents*,[1] with all its excitements and, in spite of her denials, dangers, for at a place they called "Leopard Camp," where giraffe strolled near them quite curious and unafraid, so ignorant were they of white men and their weapons, she went down sick—very sick—perhaps as a result of the water, which was so thick and slimy that when filtering it the candle of the hand-filter had to be cleaned after each glassful. She was so ill for a time that she had to be carried in a hammock improvised from a tent-pole and a rug, but fortunately recovered as they moved to healthier conditions.

Near the Amala river they came upon a tribe of primitive Masai, who gaped in astonishment at the first white woman they had seen.

"Who is this *bibi* who skins her hands?" they demanded among themselves, as Mrs Ness drew off her riding-gloves —a performance which they pleaded with her to repeat again and again, their interest and curiosity developing to such awkward degrees that Mrs Ness finally got rid of them only by pointing to a tree and firing her revolver at it. They left her!

Those were the days when Kenya Province had only just been opened to the white man. Mrs Ness, indeed, was the third woman given a permit to enter. A visit from strangers was the signal not only for strange dances and native festivals in their honour, but for deputations loaded with presents. On one occasion they grew into a veritable hill of bananas, sugar-cane, and mealies, crowned by a sheep from the chief. "I wondered what would happen to all that mountain," said Mrs Ness. The question was answered by the porters: by morning it had gone.

Those early and idyllic *safari* days were often repeated.

[1] Methuen.

Then came the War, cleaving the past away with a ruthless knife. When Mrs Ness went out again in 1920 she went alone.

A few years later she made the African trans-continental journey from north to south, for the urge came over her to explore some of the more remote and less known parts of Africa.

In the heart of the continent lay Lake Kivu, never looked on by white man until 1894. Lake Kivu is a lovely sheet of water, the second highest lake in Africa, 4829 feet above sea-level, ringed with mountains rising to 9000 feet, filled with islands, fringed by tortuous bays, swept by sudden and violent storms, and with a 'rainy season,' that tropical phenomenon, lasting seven whole months, from September to April.

The country round Uganda and the eastern edge of the Belgian Congo, which she had to traverse to reach the lake, had been crossed so comparatively seldom that even out there on the spot she was not fortunate enough to find anyone who could give her definite information about it, except for one thing: it was not a journey for women to make alone. In spite of such discouragements Mrs Ness continued to cling to the idea, and while motoring to Fort Portal heard rumours of a white man who had been there and might undertake to guide her. A messenger was sent off to where it was thought he might be—eighty miles into the blue. Meanwhile Mrs Ness decided to go to the Congo whatever happened, and made preparations to start on her journey.

Certain things she had discovered. First she had to motor 300 miles to Kabale, the last white man's station in Southern Uganda, and travel on *safari*, first to Ruchuru, then through the Belgian Congo and the volcanic lands to Lake Kivu, and afterwards through Ruanda-Urundi to Lake Tanganyika. She did not know then what transport

she was to find at each successive stage, but had arranged to have fifty porters waiting at Kabale for her. All she had brought with her was her bed and bedding and list of stores made on previous camping expeditions. If she went on with her journey she would have only two days after returning from Fort Portal to find servants, equipment, provisions, money, and motor-lorry, the reason for such haste being the approach of the rainy season.

But her experience had endowed her with one great talent—the power of accomplishing what people told her would be impossible. She made out her order; it should all be packed, she was promised, and listed in twenty-four hours. When she returned on the next morning to check it nothing at all had been packed, and the 'chop-boxes' had not even arrived. She stood over the assistants from the hardware store for hours until they were almost reduced to tears! But she got the provisions packed—and in time.

The next thing was her carrying-chair. None was obtainable in the time. She knew, however, that she could not walk all the way, and no animal could be taken on account of 'disease' areas, so she had a strong wood-and-canvas chair made quickly for her, which could be roped on to stout bamboo-poles from the forest when she came to it.

Money to pay the porters was a problem. Paper was not understood, nor coins of large denominations. Mrs Ness had to take so many thousands of one-cent pieces that it took more than one porter to carry them on the march.

Portable tins for paraffin for lighting the hurricane lamps were another problem, solved by a helpful Chief of Police. The next was servants, who consented to be engaged under the blithe misapprehension that they had a *mem-sahib* ignorant of *safaris*, who would easily become their prey. Alas for their hopes!

But at last everything was assembled, and she set out on

the first lap of 186 miles, at the end of which she hoped to meet the as yet unknown Englishman who was to accompany her to Lake Kivu.

He was there, having made a forced march across country to be in time, and at Kabale they picked up the fifty porters, eight of whom (four at a time) were chosen to carry the chair when required. It proved to be an extremely uncomfortable mode of travelling, for they placed the poles on the top of their heads, and looked on Mrs Ness, she declared, somewhat as a load of beans.

In a short while they came to Lake Bunyonyi, the "Lake of Little Birds," to the farther side of which canoes waited to transport them to the rest-houses in which they were to spend the night—clean, bare affairs, made of branches and mud, with thatched roofs and mud floors, primarily built for Government officials on tour.

Imagine the scene. The camp-fire in front of the open doorway, half covered by a ground-sheet, sending patterns of leaping flames on the walls of the hut; the rush of bats circling round and round, and the guard outside (ordered by the Government, owing to the recent murder of a European) talking and talking by the fire, while down in the valley the lake lay still and calm under a mist.

On the next day they struck the narrow foot-track which was to lead to the Congo—sometimes wider, sometimes narrower, sometimes in ruts, grass-grown or almost obliterated with reeds and elephant grass. On and on it wound, along elephant tracks, or almost hanging over a precipitous slope, or leading through forest or swampy valley, where giant lobelias grew twelve feet high, and pink and blue pea-flowers and yellow daisies made enchanting patches of colour against a background of feathery bamboo.

So they pushed on, through surroundings of primeval beauty, until at last they arrived at the crater-lands of the Mfumbiro Mountains, where the ground looked as though

in some period it had been heaved upward and left as gigantic mounds, treeless and bare but for grass.

"The routine of one day was like the next," wrote Mrs Ness, "yet each day unlike the last, for each had its new lake, its new mountain, its sunshine, rain, new people, heat, and cold."

The lava rocks made the going so difficult for the porters that Mrs Ness scarcely used her chair, and walked for miles, until at last they reached Kisolo, the first large village they had seen, inhabited only by natives.

The chief immediately sent messages inviting the white lady to festivals in her honour. They included strange scenes, such as wild dances by semi-pygmies who inhabit the slopes of the volcanoes, together with gorillas and chimpanzees. But it was necessary to press on.

They left Uganda therefore and came to Ruchuru, in the Province Orientale of the Belgian Congo, where they met the first resident Europeans since Kabale.

Ruchuru, however, in spite of this distinction, was 'no picnic.' Wood was scarce, water had to be fetched three miles, and for food they had to kill the chickens that had travelled with them in baskets. The rainy season was approaching prematurely, and the days were showery and thundery. Jiggers—minute insects which lay their eggs under the skin—had become so troublesome that for some days Mrs Ness could scarcely walk. She was thankful indeed when new porters were collected, and they could set out for Lake Kivu, another six to eight days' march.

But the weather did not improve. A bad storm showed signs of brewing. Thunder rumbled round the craters of the volcanoes, the plain was blotted out in a blue-black haze, a cold wind blew as they toiled over the lava rocks, and when Mrs Ness's tent was pitched the rain came down in sheets. But not even those were the real rains: they were due in three days, said a White Father, one of a little colony

of missionaries they encountered so far from civilization that one of them had never so much as seen an aeroplane.

A strange land, that, with its volcanoes, its lava rocks, its black dust, storms, tropical cold and heat, houses built of fire-burned lava rock, and lava roads too, each stone, carried on a man's head, placed carefully in position and ultimately bound together with grass.

On the third day came the rains, as the White Father had prophesied. The water poured through Mrs Ness's sturdy raincoat; it poured through the roof of the rest-house, making the floor a sea of mud. Even the grass outside was drowned in mud. There was no wood for fire, hardly enough to cook a poor meal, and on the next day Mrs Ness had to get into clothes that were still soaking wet. She slept, and woke to hear the grunt of a lion. "It did not hunt in vain. Next morning men passed with bullock meat."

After three days it was still raining, in spite of a prophecy by the porters, and there was no sign of Lake Kivu. The track was so slippery that Mrs Ness could hardly stand. But the porters were right. The rain ceased, gradually the heavy clouds lifted, there in the distance lay a sheet of water. They entered a short, deep gorge which led to it, and on the other side, by the time they had reached it, the sun shone. The water lapped gently on to sloping sands in a little bay; the air was full of the scent of jasmine. Strangest of all, and perhaps more welcome than the most dazzling beauties of Nature in that part of the world, was a group of little houses in the distance, as unexpected as if they had risen up out of nothing, like a mirage.

This was Kissenji, the Belgian headquarters. Since those days it has become quite frequented.

At this point Mrs Ness had a problem to decide. She was determined to travel the whole length of the lake. There were three ways in which she could make such a

journey—by land, by a tiny steamer, or by canoe. Land would mean about eight days of hard walking, often out of sight of the lake; the steamer, calling twice a month, meant a long wait and three days without a cabin; canoes meant risk, possible danger, but doing what she was told only two white men had done before—that was, travelling the whole length of the lake by dugout.

By dint of much effort and a certain amount of influence the canoes were procured from a native chief—four of them, one belonging to a cannibal tribe, with thirty-two paddlers. The success of the venture now depended on the weather. Not even in fine weather is it safe to row out far from the lake shore, for sudden and violent storms arise in the twinkling of an eye.

However, a fine morning dawned, and they decided to chance it. All the canoes leaked, all were only two or three feet broad, but Mrs Ness declares that after the first half-hour or so she felt no insecurity. The men were all accomplished paddlers, moving fast or travelling at a snail's pace as the spirit moved them.

Before the end of the first day they were to sample a little of what Lake Kivu could produce. Suddenly a strange white streak appeared in the distance, moving fast towards them; a breath of cold wind blew, and they found themselves enwrapped in a sheet of fierce rain, in a canoe which the heaving water was tossing about as if it were a cork.

The boys paddled furiously for a rocky island looming ahead, but it offered little shelter. By the time the storm had passed—as suddenly as it had risen—the canoe was a quarter full of water, and there was no sign of the three other canoes at all. It was over an hour before they were found.

That storm was by no means the last. Over and over again storms swept over the little craft, and the water

'boiled,' as the natives say. Over and over again the canoes rushed for land just in time, to be pulled into safety over the rushes by the boys. The tents had to be put up in the soaking, dripping grass, and at the first dim light of dawn they had to push off again for another eleven hours over the water, without a stop for food.

Uncomfortable, strange, even dangerous, travel, to put the best face on it—and yet Mrs Ness was sorry when it came to an end and they reached Chungugu, the beginning of a road running through Ruanda-Urundi to Lake Tanganyika.

Alas for optimistic notions of a quick journey thus! But Mrs Ness set off on a march of eight days with chair and porters, so pestered by jiggers that again she could scarcely walk. On the way she came into contact with the Tusi tribe, whose women have been seen by very few white people indeed, and actually talked with one who was wearing so many fibre-anklets that they formed a solid trouser-leg right up to the knee—a rare sight then, which Mrs Ness was fortunate to be allowed to photograph.

After some days they left behind the valley-country and came upon the plain by the Rusizi river, and next a land of sulphur springs, where steaming water, smelling most offensively, spurted out of the earth. All the game seemed to have disappeared, but at one point a chief came with a tale of a man-eating leopard which was terrifying his people. It certainly terrified Mrs Ness's cook to such an extent that he trembled every time he had to carry a dish of food across the compound to her.

No one can forecast what may happen to roads or rivers during the rainy season in Africa. It was no surprise, therefore, to find what should have been a shallow ford swollen so that the water was up to the porters' necks and almost washing them downstream. At the next camp the porters refused to carry their loads any farther: the country was

known to be terribly unhealthy, and, to settle the question, a cloud-burst occurred on the very day they got there.

Mrs Ness by no means benefited by the exchange of porters, however, for the succeeding ones quite frankly refused to do anything at all when they reached the next river, where the native bridge had been entirely washed away, except to sit down and wait for the flood to abate, as the local natives assured them that it would. There was only one thing to do, and Mrs Ness did it—wait in the fierce heat of the noon sun, for there was no shade at all, until the local natives decided that the first carrying across of the loads could be attempted.

At last word was brought that the "men of the river" would attempt to carry her in her chair to the other side. Ready to attempt anything rather than suffer further delay, she assented. A dozen hoisted her in her chair on to their hands extended above their heads, while another dozen formed a supporting chain, which before long had to swim, as the water rose over the bearers' mouths. But at last the little party reached shallower water and the other side.

Of the following few days Mrs Ness gives a vivid picture which cannot be bettered:

> The track was half submerged, and the mud slippery as glass. Dry ground had become swamp, swamp had grown into rivers, while all the rivers were in flood. . . . Time and again when we came to swamps the porters fell into the deep water-filled holes made by the feet of elephants that had crossed and left pits for the unwary. Hour after hour they struggled on, sometimes on slippery paths, sometimes ankle-deep, sometimes waist-deep, in water, distracted into the bargain by thorns, for all the track seemed overgrown with spiked creepers, so that hardly a minute passed without a halt, when one or other would stand on one foot and extract a thorn from the other. Down in the gullies, where there were trees and dense undergrowth, it was gloomy and the air heavy and damp. Often I speculated as to what would be the best steps to take should we

find elephants barring the road, for by no possibility could we have turned aside.

But all would have been bearable had it not been for the mosquitoes. As the porters slipped and slid in the pestilential swamps they brushed aside the overhanging elephant grass, from each blade of which rose a swarm of disturbed insects. All day they stung, while the sun shone its hottest. I turned up my coat collar, buttoned up my cuffs, and then spent my time protecting my face as best I could. . . . Truly, it seemed a new kind of hell, this land of water and insects.

At last they were nearing the end of their journey. The swamps gave way to a plain, then to villages, where huts lined the roadside and caravans passed continually. And at last they were in Uzumbura, then the capital of Urundi, where it came almost as a shock to see the natives wearing straw hats and white shoes—and there was something which called itself an hotel!

At Uzumbura Mrs Ness caught a steamer to Albertville, in the Congo, then to Kabalo, on the Lualaba river, from which place she proceeded by river-boat to Bukama, which was actually only eight days from Capetown by connecting trains. Once she was at Albertville she discovered how Central Africa was being developed, and she decided that rail, steam, the motor-car, and, above all, the aeroplane have done away with what used to be called the Dark Continent.

The utter isolation which had so far characterized her journey now gave place to the very opposite, and the steamer on which she was to travel from Kabalo was so loaded with natives and Europeans of all nationalities that there was hardly room to stand on the boat. In all this chaos there was abundant amusement to reconcile one for the acute discomfort, and there was much to be thankful for. Without accident she had come through the wilds, and without accident she finished the now simple journey to the Cape.

Having accomplished the White Nile-Ruanda journey safely Mrs Ness thought much about the mysterious Lake Chad, in the eastern corner of Nigeria, its northern waters lapping the Sahara Desert, and, in spite of its great size, 120 miles long by 30 miles wide, only averaging four to six feet in depth.

Nigeria is not a country which caters for tourists: even serious travellers may find it difficult on the spot to assemble the equipment necessary to carry them beyond the railway terminus. Mrs Ness decided that her experience was sufficient to carry her through a country which was quite unknown to her, and she therefore made preparations to undertake a journey, this time by car, through the Bauchi and Bornu Provinces to Lake Chad, thence to Gao, in French West African territory, and then across the Sahara to Algeria.

If you travel in Nigeria you must travel self-contained. There are difficulties even then. But at last her little expedition was assembled, consisting of a second-hand Morris touring car, a 25-cwt. Morris commercial lorry, provisions, petrol, camp equipment, and five natives—two drivers, a mechanic, a personal boy, and a cook-interpreter. The separate car was taken partly to impress favourably native chiefs, who would never have seen a white woman travelling alone.

Mrs Ness began her motor journey of 3325 miles long at Jos on the Bauchi plateau, during the three driest and coolest months of the year—that is, from December onward. Although Jos is the headquarters of the great tin-mining industry, the country fringing it is inhabited by primitive pagan tribes.

The road was a fascinating one—through hills and valleys strewn with gigantic boulders, through little mud villages, through traffic composed of donkeys, lorries, and laden men and women.

History has been made on that road, and recent history.

Tombstones in graveyards far from civilization bear famous names, but the market-places have changed little since Europeans first visited them in the middle of the last century.

Mrs Ness slept mostly in rest-houses, unfurnished and sometimes infested with bats and white ants. At Dikwa she slept—the only European there—inside the wall of an old fort formerly inhabited by Rabah, once a slave-boy, later a raider from the Sudan, who in 1892 overran and conquered Bornu province.

As she neared Lake Chad her appearance caused wild excitement. Sometimes the entire population of villages ran from miles around to see the car; the children ran away in terror, with the hobbled donkeys and horses. The dogs ran after them for miles. If Mrs Ness herself stepped out of her car or from her rest-house she was followed everywhere by a crowd, and rows of spectators drew up in anticipation of her appearance.

There was, so she had heard, a sixteen-mile track from Marte to Baga Ngelewa, on Lake Chad, but Mrs Ness had sufficient experience to inquire further from the *ajia*, or chief, of Marte before she pursued her journey farther. It was fortunate that she did so, or she might never have arrived. Even the smaller car, which was the only one she took, would have sunk into the sand, which the *ajia* guarded against by having *zana* mats laid over it at the worst points all along the track. At last the bare sand gave place to grass, and then to swamp, where the rank grass grew so high that there was no sign of the lake, although it was supposedly the lake shore. Twenty minutes of being carried on a native's back, however, brought her actually to water—twenty minutes of passive torture from the largest flies and daytime mosquitoes she had yet met in Africa, her hands being available only for clinging to her bearer. Even then it took an hour's poling through mud and grass to reach the

open water of Lake Chad—a unique spectacle, with its floating islands broken off the bank, drifting about in the shallow water, its masses of brilliant green weed, papyrus, blue-and-white water-lilies.

After leaving Marte for the second time the small Morris broke down, and Mrs Ness was forced to continue her journey to Baga Seyoram by lorry, this being the second time only that motor vehicles had reached this small, remote lake village. This is hardly to be wondered at, for it took the car nearly six hours to do thirty miles, even though the track had again been laid with *zana* mats for miles. "It took the better part of two villages to extricate the lorry from the deep sand and to push it along its way," wrote Mrs Ness, "and half the inhabitants of a village also slept out half-way, so as to be able to push on the return-journey."

After further investigation of the shores of the lake in a native papyrus canoe Mrs Ness turned back towards Kano, an amazing city built inside a wall, twelve miles in circumference, and enclosing not only the town, but cultivated fields and water-supplies, so that the inhabitants in the old days could withstand a siege. From Kano she proceeded to Katsena, ruled by an emir who has visited England, and thence to the French Niger provinces, where she was much impressed by the general excellence of the roads. Even for isolated stretches of a hundred miles at a time, where she saw no village, no human being, no car, the road maintained its excellent surface, with telegraph-poles and even a telephone in places. And one of the aims of the French for the future was a chain of hotels linking up Algeria, in Northern Africa, with the Belgian Congo, far south of the equator.

The most advanced of these hotels was then at Gao, on the river Niger, and the last stretch of road which led to this was exceptionally difficult, for in some places it was flooded, and in others it was again necessary to get natives to

dislodge the cars from the sand. In Gao ancient met the modern, as the new iron-framed hotel stood directly in view of the old tomb of the Askias, for Gao was once the capital of the great Songhai Empire.

At Gao Mrs Ness sent back her cars to Nigeria, and started on the last part of her journey—the desert crossing of the waterless Tanezruft—a crossing made possible by the amazing exploits of pioneers during the last fifteen years.[1] Immediately after the conquest of the desert by these Frenchmen in Citroën caterpillar cars a certain fellow-countryman of theirs named Gradis founded the Compagnie Générale Transsaharienne, which succeeded in making the journey not with caterpillar cars, but with six-wheeled Renaults.

An amazing journey even to contemplate, but think of it: Mrs Ness had actually been able to book a seat for it in London! Her car was scheduled to leave Gao on March 14. When she got there she found that it had left at an earlier date, but, fortunately, the company provided her with another—a strange, pale four-wheeled monster, with sliding windows covered by shutters against the terrible glare of the sun, and a special body built to protect against the temperature, which may vary seventy degrees in the course of a day and night. There were two drivers, one French and one native; she was the only passenger.

The desert in that part of the Sahara is known as the Tanezruft, "The Land of Thirst." From Gao to Reggan is 807 miles, during nearly 700 miles of which there is no natural water of any sort. Before the car started, provisioned for ten days in case of accidents, a wireless message was sent out, so that in case of non-arrival search might be made by car or aeroplane. It is only too easy to lose one's way, for there are no inhabitants and no roads, the chauffeur driving by compass or following wheel-tracks of the few

[1] Of these you may read in *Recent Heroes of Modern Adventure* (Harrap), Chapter XI.

cars which had crossed previously, or strange landmarks, such as empty petrol tins and bottles buried in the sand by their necks. There is a 'desert sense' as well as a 'road sense,' but this sometimes fails. The greatest danger is lack of petrol, and as precaution against this the company had sunk a tank in the desert with an ordinary petrol pump, which the driver unlocked with a special key. The pump and five petrol tins were then the only landmarks for the station. But what tins! Each holding ninety-six gallons of petrol! In these days, however, the petrol pump has a shelter and an attendant.

When crossing the Syrian Desert by car many years ago, before any transport company had begun to function, Mrs Ness had found that the French authorities forbade one car to cross, three being the minimum number allowed. But in the Sahara one only was permitted, though the distance between water was nearly twice as great. To travel in the wrong direction for any length of time undoubtedly meant consuming so much petrol as to make even the reaching of the desert petrol tank an impossibility. This fear, fortunately proved to be unfounded, came to Mrs Ness and her driver, and many anxious moments were spent in consequence. For to be stranded in the waterless Sahara hundreds of miles from help is a terrible fate, and one which as recently as 1935 resulted in the tragic death of two desert motorists.

It was a case of driving day and night, and they accomplished the whole 807 miles in forty-six hours, which is a creditable effort, considering the frequent and long stops to dig the car out of the sand, often taking an hour or more. The only sign of life Mrs Ness saw throughout was one bird and one lizard.

At Reggan, a palm oasis, there is a fort-like hotel. From there Mrs Ness proceeded northwards to Colomb Becar, a stretch of road which, since the murder of a French military

party, might be used only on two days a week, when it could be patrolled. The danger of attack by marauding tribes has become no less since those days, however, and the road is now closed to ordinary travellers.

The French have inaugurated an air service, however, to take its place; they contemplate a railway. But, as Mrs Ness has truly said, "Money alone could never conquer the desert. The trail was blazed, the route was found, the service is maintained, by brave and fearless men."

To Mrs Ness the successful conclusion of one journey only means the mapping out of another. Before long she was back in Africa, discovering for herself what the new fair-weather roads opened up in Nyasaland were like, for now Africa's chain of great lakes has been linked together by road, and another new field has been opened for the intrepid motorist.

The magnificent scenery remains, the native peoples are often still primitive and natural and unspoiled, the opening up of the country is a forward step which must come; and yet one feels that Mrs Ness, were there no political or economical or social questions involved, would prefer the thousand hardships, risks, loneliness, and discomforts of the Africa of yesterday to an Africa which has no surprises to offer, no mysteries to reveal.

CHAPTER XV

WINGED WOMAN

The Great Achievements of "Our Amy"

ONE of the best things about Amy," said her husband, Jim Mollison, "is that she never lets you down." So, in a sentence, he summed up the character of one of the most remarkable Englishwomen of the twentieth century.

There is a saying that every private soldier carries a Field-Marshal's *bâton* in his knapsack, and it is true that once or twice in a century a private rises to the highest command. He takes thirty years or more of hard service to do so, but Amy Johnson rose to national fame in less than half as many months. It was not until July 1929 that she obtained her pilot's licence; less than a year later she made her historic flight to Australia.

Actually, of course, Amy had been working much longer than this in the direction of her great achievement, for flying had attracted her from a very early age, and when she was fourteen she spent all her birthday money in a flight, and was bitterly disappointed that it lasted so short a time.

As all the world knows, Amy Johnson had no special advantages in the way of birth, money, or education, a fact which makes her performances the more remarkable. She attended a secondary school, did well, and took first-class honours in Latin at the Oxford Senior Local Examination. She went on to Sheffield University, and took her B.A. degree in economics. Her parents wished her to become a teacher, but this profession did not appeal to her, and she entered a business office, beginning at the munificent salary of a pound a week.

She hated it. She hated it so much that she became ill and had to give it up. It is a mistake to imagine that Amy Johnson is one of those extraordinarily strong women who seem able to endure hardships better than men. Nothing of the sort! Though she has a good constitution, she has had her full share of illness, and is no stronger physically than the average. It is in mind, not in body, that her powers so greatly exceed those of her fellows.

When she recovered she obtained a post in an advertising agent's office, where she received thirty shillings a week. This work was as distasteful as her previous task, and as soon as she had saved a few pounds she went to London. In spite of her qualifications she found it most difficult to obtain employment. She had to serve in a shop, but a month of that finished her: she became ill again, and was promptly discharged.

Her fourth venture was more permanent. She got work in a solicitor's office, where her salary was enough, at any rate, to live on. But her life was a lonely one. Her ideas were so different from those of most girls in a similar position that she had few friends. On Sundays she would go off for a lonely bus-ride, and always she took the bus that ran past Stag Lane Aerodrome. It was the thrill of her life to watch 'planes in the air and see them land.

One day she summoned up enough courage to go inside the gates and inquire the cost of lessons. When she came out she was very thoughtful, for it seemed that by exercising extreme economy she might be able to afford a course. She took the plunge, and wrote to the London Aeroplane Club for membership. Then came a sharp disappointment. The list was full, and she had to wait several weary months for a vacancy. It was not until the autumn of 1928 that she became a member. One result was that her lessons had to be taken in winter, and often in bad weather. Yet this was a blessing in disguise, for it taught her much that she would

never have learned during the bright, windless days of summer.

Her first flight was not a success. She was wearing a borrowed helmet, which was so much too large that her ear-phones would not stay anywhere near her ears. As a result she could not hear a word of her instructor's directions, and he, not knowing the real state of affairs, grew angry and told her that she was hopeless.

Any other girl might have given it up then and there, but not Amy. The next time her helmet was right, and her instructor was Captain F. R. Matthews, who quickly realized that his new pupil had unusual qualities. Her intense love of flying appealed to him, and she made rapid progress.

Yet between bad weather and lack of cash the process of reaching proficiency was a long one, and it was not until 1929 that she passed her tests and obtained her 'A' licence. This was her reward for spending long months without amusements and without those small niceties in the way of clothes which are almost a necessity to the modern girl.

But the pilot's licence, from Amy's point of view, was only the beginning of things. She had already joined the mechanical section, and, getting up at five each morning, spent the hours from six to half-past eight working on engines, after which she changed and hurried to the office. The mechanics at first resented having a girl among them, but when they found that no job was too hard or too dirty for her they became reconciled to her presence. In the end she obtained not only her 'C' licence as an engineer, but the 'A' licence as a rigger. Besides all this, she spent her spare time—one wonders where she got it—doing secretarial work in the offices of the Air League.

There are limits to the capacity of even an Amy Johnson. One day the head of the firm put it to her plainly that the choice was between her work and her flying. She had to give up the latter if she wished to keep the former. With a

little money in hand the girl would not have hesitated, for her whole being was wrapped up in flying, but she had not a pound. All her earnings, except the small amount necessary for her keep, had gone in aerial training. She went to her father and told him how things were.

At first he was dismayed at the idea of his daughter's turning to flying for a living, but when he realized the real state of the case he promised her to pay all the expenses of her 'B' licence for commercial flying.

By this time Amy had already formed the idea of a solo flight to Australia, but the difficulties before her were gigantic. She calculated that she might buy a second-hand aeroplane for about £700, but any such trip as she had in mind was going to cost a great deal more than that. The mere cost of petrol for such a flight would be £90, and of oil about another £10. Then there were charts, permits, money for landing-fees, for personal expenses, and—this also had to be thought of—the cost of the return-journey either by 'plane or boat. The total was staggering for a girl who had never had more than five pounds a week.

She was not dismayed, but began visiting people who might help her, among them an Australian Minister, the Australian High Commissioner, and editors of newspapers. This chapter might be filled with the story of Amy's requests and rebuffs. In the end it was Air Vice-Marshal Sir Sefton Brancker who listened to her and gave her an introduction to Lord Wakefield. Her father had put up £300; Lord Wakefield, realizing that this girl was some one out of the ordinary run, advanced the rest of the money, and Amy at once purchased Captain Hope's De Havilland Moth, the machine he had used for taking photographs during the Prince of Wales's shooting-trip in Africa.

The machine was several years old, and had already flown 35,000 miles, but it was in excellent condition, and was faster than the average Moth, having been streamlined

by its former owner. Also it had extra tankage. Amy painted it green and silver, named it *Jason*, her father's trade-mark, and early on the morning of May 6, 1930, quietly left Croydon Aerodrome.

Ten hours later she landed at Vienna, eight hundred miles away. And this was her first flight outside the narrow limits of England! The next night found her in Constantinople. She had covered 1600 miles in two days. Not bad for a girl who had never before flown more than 150 miles at a stretch!

So far the weather had been kind, but on the third day a layer of heavy cloud forced her to fly lower than she liked. Reaching that towering wall of rock the Taurus Mountains, she followed the railway, which runs through a deep ravine. Since clouds covered the peaks Amy decided to fly through this ravine. That was all very well so long as it was clear, but, without the slightest warning, her machine plunged into a mass of thick vapour. It was a nightmare of horror. It was out of the question to turn, and there was nothing for it but to carry on, expecting every instant to crash into one of the precipitous sides of the gorge.

Suddenly she was in the clear, to find her machine driving head on into the cliff-face. There was just time to right the 'plane and save herself from certain death. Her adventures were not over, for as she neared Bagdad she was caught in a terrific sandstorm. Seized by howling gusts of hot wind, the machine plunged downward and fell two thousand feet before its pilot could regain control. For ages, it seemed, she struggled, blinded by stinging clouds of desert sand, and at last, when the cloud cleared a little, managed to land. Even then she had to hang on to the machine with all her strength to save it from being overturned by the savage blasts. Two hours of struggle, then at last the gale dropped, and the exhausted girl managed to rise again and reach Bagdad.

Off at six on the next morning, she flew very high, passed above a second sandstorm, and, in spite of a head-wind, covered 850 miles. The heat tried her sorely. It was 110 degrees in the shade, but in an aeroplane like Amy's there was no shade. That night she reached Bandar Abbas.

By this time the world at large was beginning to sit up and take notice of this unknown girl flier. At Karachi, her next stop, she was amazed to get an official reception and an invitation to Government House. She deserved it. She had reached India in six days, and beaten Bert Hinkler's record. Yet at starting she had been looked upon merely as another over-ambitious flying fool.

In spite of heavy head-winds she covered the whole width of the sub-continent of India in two days, and was in Calcutta on the eighth day from home.

The ninth day was a terrible ordeal—fearful storms, sheets of rain, and, as evening drew on, thick mist. Flying almost blind, she saw an open space beneath her with buildings round it, and, taking it for the aerodrome of Rangoon, came down, ran into a ditch, smashed her propeller, and damaged her right wing. It was not the aerodrome of Rangoon, but the football-field of Insein, a small village some miles north of Rangoon.

Most women in Amy Johnson's place would have despaired. Amy, exhausted as she was, set instantly to work on repairs. Happily she had a spare propeller with her, but the wing was another matter. Every one in the village helped, and after two days of strenuous work *Jason* was himself again. But there was no room to rise, and the 'plane had to be towed by road to Rangoon.

From Rangoon Amy started for Bangkok, about 350 miles away. The monsoon, the great rains of the Tropics, had broken, and again she had to fight through furious downpours of rain and a full gale of wind. In ordinary bad weather a pilot may rise above the clouds, but here they

were more than two miles thick, and there was no getting above them. She had to cross a lofty range of mountains, which she could not even see, while if anything went wrong there was not a hope of landing safely in the dense and dripping jungle which covered the whole land.

On and on she struggled, terrified that her petrol would be exhausted, yet in the end she won through, and after seven hours' flying reached the Siamese flying-ground of Don Muang, just north of Bangkok. This was the twelfth day, and now, instead of being ahead of Hinkler's record, she was behind it. Undismayed, she started early on the next morning for Singapore, only to find herself forcing her way into weather even more terrible than that of the previous day. And the worst of it was that the gale was against her all the way. At three in the afternoon she reached the town of Singora, and, since now it was hopeless to dream of gaining Singapore in daylight, came down and set to work on her battered machine.

Whatever the length of her day's flight, however tired she was with long hours of driving through fog and storm, Amy Johnson never failed to go over her machine at the end of each day. She is, remember, a mechanic as well as a great pilot. Without doubt it is to this fact that she owes her immunity from serious accident. At Singora she spent no fewer than five hours on her engine before she was satisfied.

In the morning, when ready to start, she found such a crowd of Siamese as to block her run-way completely. There was a long wait before a lane could be cleared, and even then the lane was so narrow that she was in terror of striking one of the eager natives. The weather was better, she reached Singapore in safety, and had a great reception, but on the following day conditions were again bad, she was unable to reach her destination, Sourabaya, and was forced to land at a place called Tjoemal on very bad and wet ground.

In landing the fabric of one of the wings was torn by projecting stakes, and it was a long job to mend the holes. In the morning the task of getting the machine up off the sodden ground was difficult and dangerous, but, once in the air, she had the company and guidance of the Dutch mail-'plane as far as Sourabaya.

Now came the most perilous part of her journey, which lay all down the islands of the Dutch East Indies, and then over the Timor Sea. The risk was the greater because *Jason* had developed a suspicion of magneto-trouble. Amy left Sourabaya at six in the morning, and it was supposed that she would land at Bima, on the island of Sumbawa. At half-past eleven came news that her 'plane had been seen passing high over that place, and that it seemed evident she was intending to reach Atamboea, four hundred miles farther on. Experts were troubled, for they did not think that she could possibly get there in daylight.

They were right. Twilight caught Amy still over the shark-infested Timor Sea, and in a bad fright. Then, when she had almost abandoned hope, suddenly land loomed on the horizon, and she headed for it. In the thick dusk she made a forced landing in a tiny clearing among the mountains, and was at once surrounded by a horde of wild-looking natives armed with spears.

For a moment Amy fully thought that her last hour had come, but, instead of running his spear through her body, the leading native patted her hand and made signs for her to follow him. The brown men led her miles over mountain paths, and Amy could barely totter when she arrived at last at a little mission church, where a kindly Dutch *padre* met her and gave her supper and a bed. *Jason* was undamaged, and in the morning Amy was able to fly to Atamboea, only a few miles away, and make ready for the last and worst stage of all, the flight across the terrible Timor Sea.

As if tired of trying to bully and destroy this invincible

flying girl, the elements gave her perfect weather for the passage, and quite early in the afternoon she sighted the coast of Australia.

"I nearly cried with sheer joy," she has confessed. "I think I went a little mad. I flung my air-cushion overboard, then zoomed down over the Dutch tanker *Phorus* and threw a cake at a man on the deck. I realized that the crew were cheering me."

But those cheers were nothing to what greeted her when she alighted at Port Darwin. Every one in the town wanted to shake hands with her, to entertain her, to do anything she asked. Hundreds of telegrams awaited her, and hundreds more poured in. Among these was one she prized greatly. It was sent to the Governor-General of Australia, and ran as follows: "The King and Queen are thankful and delighted to know of Miss Johnson's safe arrival in Australia, and heartily congratulate her upon her wonderful and courageous achievement."

For the first time in her life Amy learned what it meant to be a popular idol, and, much as she appreciated the great welcome she received and the many kindnesses from the Australian people, she has since confessed that it was very exhausting and a good deal of an ordeal.

She flew on to Brisbane, capital of Queensland, and, by an irony of fate, it was here that she had her first real accident. In landing *Jason* ran into the boundary-fence of the aerodrome and was put out of action. As a result she went on to Sydney in an air-liner piloted by a very capable and pleasant young man, who asked her for a dance. She did not even know his name at the time. Yet it has since become her own. He was Jim Mollison.

Amy came back to Port Said by sea, and thence by air-liner, but even her tumultuous reception in Australia can hardly have prepared her for what was to happen in England. At Croydon at least two hundred thousand people

had collected to greet her, and tens of thousands lined the road all the way to London. It was all very delightful, but also very intoxicating, and there are few girls, English or otherwise, who could have kept a level head in the circumstances. But Amy Johnson was, and is, exceptional, and one sentence in her speech at the luncheon given to her by the *Daily Mail* on the day after her arrival is enough to prove this fact. Looking round at the long lines of celebrities who surrounded her, she said quietly, "Three months ago I should have been glad to stand in a queue to see any one of you." If there is one complaint from which Amy has never suffered, and never will suffer, it is that of a swollen head.

Popularity is delightful, but it does not butter one's bread. The directors of the *Daily Mail* gave a more practical proof of their appreciation when they awarded to Amy a cheque for £10,000.

Then came the greatest moment of all. Amy was summoned to Buckingham Palace to receive the award of C.B.E. at the hands of his Majesty. Amy always has adventures, and on the way to the Palace she was stopped by a policeman for exceeding the speed limit. However, on proving her identity and explaining her mission she was let off with a caution. Another honour of which Amy was rightly proud was membership of the Guild of Air Pilots.

After London the provinces. Receptions and lectures here, there, and everywhere, and again an adventure which might have had very awkward results. Amy was flying to Hull alone when she ran into rain and fog. She went up above the clouds, but the pall below remained unbroken, and there was no saying where Hull lay. To make matters worse, daylight was fast fading. Amy went down, only to find herself over the sea. She still did not know where she was: it was too dark to read the compass. Worst of all, her petrol-tank was nearly empty.

She flew close to the surface, and actually took off her shoes, so that she could swim if it came to that. Suddenly a revolving light showed up ahead. It was a lighthouse, and she managed to reach the beach and make a safe landing. As she discovered later, this beach has many patches of quicksand, and it was just her good fortune that she did not strike one.

Publicity has been called "an insane mixture of intimacy and isolation." Modest by nature, Amy grew very tired of it. She needed a quiet holiday, yet even when she went, under an *alias*, to a quiet hotel in Wales she was promptly recognized. In the end she made up her mind to a fresh flight, and this time decided on Pekin. Her friends told her that it was madness. It was now winter. All Russia and Siberia would be snowbound. Amy was not to be turned from her purpose, and on January 1, 1931, left in her new Moth plane *Jason III.*

The weather was simply appalling. It took three days to reach Berlin. She left Berlin for Warsaw, got lost, and at nightfall was forced to come down in a wild part of Poland. The ground was far rougher than she had imagined, and her 'plane was upset and badly damaged. Luckily unhurt, she found herself near a small village called Amelin. The people were rough and uncivilized, and one man actually attacked and tried to rob her, but Amy managed to escape him and to hire a sleigh and reach the nearest town. Even then it was only the damage to her 'plane that prevented her from continuing her flight. Instead she went by rail to Moscow, where she had an excellent reception, and was promised all assistance if she tried her flight again during the following summer. Meantime her 'plane had been repaired, and she flew home again.

In the following July she started afresh, not for Pekin, but for Tokyo. With the exception of meeting one bad storm over Germany the rest of the flight was comparatively

easy, and her reception in Japan was entirely delightful. While in Japan she heard that Jim Mollison had broken the record for a flight from Australia to England, and at once cabled her congratulations and hopes that she would meet him at home. She then flew back all across two continents, but, instead of meeting Mollison, went down with an attack of appendicitis, and, when she became convalescent, sailed on a cruise to South Africa to recover her strength. There she arrived in time to meet Mollison as he landed at Cape-town after setting up a new small-'plane record by reaching South Africa in less than five days from England. But she saw little of her future husband in Africa. It was not until some months later that the two came together quite by chance at Heston Aerodrome. After that—well, the next thing to be recorded is their wedding at St George's, Hanover Square, in July 1932.

Their honeymoon was short, for on August 18 Mollison started in his Puss Moth *Heart's Content* on the very risky and dangerous enterprise of flying the Atlantic from east to west. One hardly likes to think of the anxiety of his wife, anxiety which grew more and more intense when the next morning came and there was still no news. Luncheon-time, still silence; then at last a page-boy came rushing in. It was all right. Jim was safe. He had lost his bearings in dense fog, and had taken six hours to cover a hundred and fifty miles. At last, tired out, he had landed at Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick, 450 miles from New York.

Mollison's plan had been to make the return flight, doing the double journey in three and a half days, but the delay had made this impossible. He had, however, made the first solo flight across the Atlantic from east to west, the first crossing of the Atlantic in a light 'plane, and had broken Kingsford Smith's time for the westerly crossing.

Jim was the next to know the anxiety of waiting for news while his wife made a long and dangerous flight. In

November 1932 Amy started in an effort to beat her husband's record to the Cape. At the start things did not go too well. Her gravity tanks leaked, owing to the pressure being too high. She got to Gao, in the Southern Sahara, refilled, left, and an hour later found she had only five gallons in her tanks, instead of over forty, as should have been the case. She had to go back to Gao, where she found that it was the fault of the man to whom she had entrusted the filling. He had not filled the tanks properly. Later a choked filter gave her a scare, yet, in spite of everything, she did the whole journey in 4 days, 6 hours, 54 minutes, beating her husband's record by more than ten hours. She was nearly dead for lack of sleep, having had only five hours since leaving England, and slept the clock round twice when she did get to bed.

Then she flew back, but this was a very different experience. Meeting terrible sandstorms in the Sahara and, later, every sort of bad weather, including snow above the Atlas Mountains, the journey took just over seven days.

The next task which Amy and her husband set themselves was a very big one. They decided to fly from London to New York, then back, non-stop, to Bagdad. It was a journey of twelve thousand miles, and for it they had a 'plane built which they named *Seafarer*. Her tanks held no fewer than four hundred gallons of petrol. This is an enormous load for a comparatively small machine, and in the attempt to take off a strut of the under-carriage collapsed and a wing struck the ground, partially wrecking the machine.

Undismayed, they quickly had the machine repaired, and at four in the afternoon of July 23, 1933, made a fresh start, and a successful one, from Pendine Sands, Carmarthenshire. At a quarter to seven on the next morning they were seen over the south side of Nova Scotia, and four hours later passed above Bar Harbour, Maine. They had crossed the

Atlantic in safety, but again luck was not with *Seafarer*. Petrol ran short, and they were forced to descend at Bridgeport. What looked like good ground turned out to be soft and swampy, the 'plane was badly damaged, and Amy herself severely bruised. Once more a great flight had to be abandoned after the hardest part of it had been completed. It is, of course, far more difficult to cross the Atlantic from east to west, in the teeth of the prevailing winds, than to fly it in the opposite direction.

Most people cherish a desire to visit some special spot on the earth's surface. All her life Amy had wished to see the Grand Canyon of the Colorado river, that terrific rift 250 miles long, averaging twelve miles in width and a mile in depth. The opportunity came in the summer of 1934, and Amy not merely visited this wonderful place, but flew over it.

The whole country is very high, six to nine thousand feet, the air is never still, and gales blow often at eighty miles an hour, and the flying conditions are, of course, extremely difficult. Pilots are advised never to try the three-point landing, but always to make a 'wheel,' or running landing. Amy took two passengers on the joy-ride over the Canyon in a Wasp-powered Travel Air. It was the first time she had ever flown one of these machines, but all went well until she landed. At that moment a strong side-gust struck the machine. "It gave us a terrific jar," Amy says, but, with characteristic modesty, continues, "Fortunately I was able to counteract it, and we finally came to rest in safety."

Of all the strokes of ill-luck which have befallen Amy and her husband the failure of their machine in the great Melbourne Air Race of October 1934 was the most unkind. They flew a Comet, practically identical with the 'plane in which Scott and Black won the race, and they beat all records for the flight to India. Leaving Mildenhall at half-past

six on Saturday morning, they actually reached Karachi at four on Sunday morning, well ahead of all other competitors. They left almost immediately, only to discover that their retractable under-carriage had failed to retract in flight, so they went straight back, and the whole day was spent in repairing it. They left at five past nine at night, and flew on towards Allahabad, but had to land at Jubbulpore to get their bearings. There they could find no suitable petrol, and had to fill up with ordinary motor-spirit.

Engine-trouble developed, and when they reached Allahabad they found that a broken oil-pipe had starved part of the engine. The result was that one or more pistons had seized, and one cylinder head had burned through. The damage was so severe that they were definitely out of the race. A cruel fate after such a brilliant start!

Despite all her brilliant achievements Amy Mollison is a shy, modest person. "Publicity is not in my line of business," she said in her speech of September 7, 1930, when she returned from her record-breaking flight to Australia. Yet, "in spite of herself," as Lord Wakefield said on the same occasion, "Amy Johnson has become a national heroine." As such and as one of the principal pioneers of long-distance flying her name will go down to posterity.

CHAPTER XVI

HELPING TO SAVE A NATION

The Story of Ann Mary Burgess and the Armenian People

MANY years ago—in 1888, to be precise—a fragile girl in the early twenties went out to Stamboul. The reason for her journey is an old, old story. Most people have forgotten it. But in 1935 the girl, now a woman of over seventy, was still living and working for the same reason in the south-eastern corner of Europe. Since those early days she had been a witness of massacres and revolutions, fire, war, and pestilence. Yet all the dread happenings of the years between had not quenched the fiery indignation which had first made her a voluntary exile, nor the determination which had carried her through them, nor the inward spirit which had preserved her confidence and faith.

"But how shall I know her?" asked a friend who was told to look out for Ann Mary Burgess on the quay of the harbour of Stamboul. "There will be hundreds of people there."

"You can't miss her. Out in Stamboul everybody—Turks, Armenians, Kurds, French, Germans, Americans, English—calls her 'the little woman with the shining face.' You'll recognize her by that. You see!"

And that description, strange as it sounded, did, indeed, prove to be the unmistakable identification-mark of a woman who had worked for a whole lifetime through an epic of sorrow.

To understand the story of Ann Mary Burgess it is necessary to know something about the Armenian people.

The fate of the Armenians has been somewhat submerged

since the end of the Great War in the woes of bigger and better-known nations. What was once a tale told in horror in every chimney-corner of Western Europe has become for the most part a dim recollection. Confronted with the question, "What has happened to the Armenians?" nine people out of ten—even nine well-informed people—will plead ignorance or hazard the haziest suggestion.

For their information, and in spite of many a contrary belief, there is still an Armenian nation. True, it is scattered far and wide, but its racial ties are as strong as ever. There is even an Armenia, though it is disguised under the name of the republic of Erivan, and as such has been absorbed in the great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

But perhaps this is beginning at the end of the story.

You may have heard a certain political quip—"What did Gladstone say in 1888?" Well, Gladstone said quite a lot in that year, and almost the most vehement part of it was reserved for the woes of the Armenian nation under the jurisdiction of the Turks.

It was during that same year that Ann Burgess set out from England for Constantinople. She was twenty-five years of age—a fair-haired, slender, delicate girl. Two years previously the doctors had declared that she was suffering from consumption. Being of the type that didn't believe in meeting trouble half-way, she continued calmly and steadily with her work. She was one of the great company who have proved the power of the spirit. She could not help doing whatever she was given to do with a fierce determination. If it had not been for that indomitable urge she would almost certainly still have been in England.

It was precisely those very qualities in her handling of her work that had singled her out for attention. The disastrous state of the Armenian nation had attracted much notice among Western Europeans and Americans. As is usually the case, political protests had been guarded to the

point of apathy. Private effort had been gallant and tireless, and numbered among the most prominent attempts at succour was a medical mission organized by the well-known Quaker family of Gillett in England. The Gilletts—in touch with all peace organizations—had heard of the outstanding work of Ann Mary Burgess. They needed very badly an Englishwoman to carry on the hospital work for their small mission. Here, it seemed to them, was a girl of the type they wanted. But would she sacrifice her life in England to take up such a job—in a foreign land, for an indefinite period, and not, it must be confessed, without its dangers?

She would! The precious gift of adaptability has always belonged to Ann Burgess in high measure. She went through the usual period of training, and when it was completed—efficiently, like everything she undertook—she set sail for Turkey.

It was about 1885 that the Armenian movement as such became known to the general public in Europe. It was just about that time that a national journal had been established in Marseilles by refugees and numerous secret societies formed to deliver the Armenians from the Turkish yoke. But persecution increased, and in 1887 a revolutionary committee was founded at Geneva, called the Hinjakists. Such opposition only drove the Turks to greater excesses of cruelty towards the unhappy Armenians under their rule. The lot of minorities has never been a happy one, but, as Dr Nansen many years later declared, "No people in modern history have suffered like the Armenians."

The little settlement to which Ann Burgess was bound was a brick house in the poorer quarter of old Stamboul, that city with a host of minarets, each crowned by a brazen crescent glittering in the sun, which has always looked so much more beautiful and impressive from a distance than from its narrow, squalid streets. There in 1881 the Friends had established their mission under the direction of Dr

Dobrashian, an Armenian with a most romantic history, married to an English lady. There two doctors and Ann Burgess had worked, quietly but doggedly, through earthquakes, fires, revolutions, wars, massacres.

Stamboul—Constantinople it was then called—must have been a city of horrors in those days. Severe earthquakes were common, terrible fires, owing to the narrow streets and wooden houses, broke out, and, worst of all, there was the Terror always brooding over the peace of the city—the eternal hatred between Moslem and Christian, Turk and Armenian, and the persecution of the latter by the ruling race, brutal with the unrestrained brutality of a primitive people.

Sometimes the Turks became a little 'panicky' when a rumour went round that "the English were coming," and they would amend their ways for a short period, but as the English, like the wolf, never did appear they grew bolder than ever, and on one occasion actually capped their cruel excesses with an impudent little insult to the Great Power which was seemingly content merely to watch, and led a donkey, with a mangy dog strapped on its back, all round the town, crying, "Make way for Queen Victoria!"

The full story of those early years has never yet been told. It waits for the person who lived through them—Miss Burgess herself. But a short glimpse of conditions must be given, heartrending though they sound, even after this long lapse of time. For much of it I am indebted to Mrs Maurice Rowntree, who worked with Miss Burgess for eight years.

First of all, it is important to realize that the Friends were allowed to work there only on sufferance. Had they intruded upon the political life of the country their medical mission would immediately have been broken up. They were allowed in as, say, political 'non-combatants.' But non-combatant, passive, as their creed admitted itself, one of the most difficult and painful things about their life was

the restraint on their freedom to step in and stop the cruelties.

Sometimes, it must be admitted, Miss Burgess and her colleagues were forced to adopt some stratagems in order to maintain their medical work, as they considered that it was absolutely necessary.

The mission house was never sufficiently large to cope with a hundredth part of the work that waited for it, and as the Turks would not give them a licence for a hospital it was decided to run counter to the Turkish laws and establish one without it. This, of course, meant carrying on the work in secret, and allowing no evidence of it to be noticed from outside. From the street, therefore, the hospital was a mere private house. Inside, however, there were twelve patients, mostly serious cases, with the inevitable result that from time to time a death occurred among them. That immediately caused a problem which is found in almost every detective story—though for very different causes—the disposal of the body. It could not be removed by daylight, or the purpose of the 'private house' would undoubtedly have been discovered. Pitch-darkness was necessary, and there was nothing for it but for Miss Burgess herself—alone, except for a manservant, as the hospital doctor lived far away and could not even be communicated with—to wait till nightfall, and then to take it somehow or other to a fitting place. Even the most level-headed might be excused for seeing ghosts during such a gruesome proceeding, but probably the most Miss Burgess would admit was that it took some courage, with city watchmen about!

In the summer of 1893 there was more activity among Armenian revolutionaries, and the Kurds (who had recently been organized into a national police force called the Hamidyeh) were ordered by the Turks to raid the mountain districts of Anatolia. For about a whole fortnight terrible slaughter was enacted—a slaughter which at last

aroused the most active and fiery indignation. The Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid, was pressed by three outside Powers—Britain, France, and Russia—for administrative reform; he signed an agreement, but immediately instructed officials to carry out more massacres all over the country. In the following summer the massacres broke out again: whole villages were devastated, and hunger and disease stalked through all the Armenian districts of the country. In the August of 1896 armed Armenian revolutionaries seized the Imperial Ottoman Bank at Constantinople in a desperate effort to call attention to their plight. In revenge the Turkish Government instigated a local rabble to slaughter all the male Armenian residents of the city. Nobody knows how many perished during that dreadful time: the number has been estimated at a minimum of 7000, almost entirely males.

In the middle of it all the English girl—now grown into a woman—remained at her post. She had to stay there while scenes too ghastly to describe were being enacted outside. Nearly fifteen hundred of the killed were thrown into carts and tipped into a long trench outside the city, one on top of another. Those who were left with their lives were running hither and thither, in the maddest confusion, like scared rabbits, with no idea whither to run for safety. One huge party of two or three thousand souls took refuge in a big Armenian church, but it proved no refuge at all, for the soldiers followed and, tired with their individual butchering, set fire to the church and all in it. Death by shooting was considered a merciful end granted to only a few. Men were tortured, hands and arms cut off, eyes gouged out. Hundreds of houses were burned, hundreds robbed. In some districts the Armenians were almost exterminated; there were one hundred thousand women and girls and small children wandering about without any means of relief or subsistence. The Friends were feeding

thousands daily at 2½*d.* a head. The mission could do little but distribute bread. The social order seemed completely shattered, and reorganization almost impossible.

No house in the Armenian quarter could be considered safe from the Turkish soldiers, and, as usual with mob violence, the mischief was often done before even the doers realized it. Mr Joseph Burtt, in his book *The People of Ararat*,[1] to which I am indebted for much of the historical data in this short chapter, tells a story of how Sir Henry Elliot, in a friendly discussion with a Turkish officer, once said, "There is one thing that I wish you would forbid your soldiers to do, and that is to massacre women and children."

"It would not be the slightest good," the Turk replied. "They get so excited that they don't in the least know what they are doing."

The Turk was perfectly accurate: his countrymen acted on the assumption of kill first, explain afterwards. And Miss Burgess, knowing this, wondered what she could do to safeguard the mission house, indistinguishable from any others round into which the Turk would march to pillage, to burn, and to destroy. Indeed, the British Consul had sent a message round to the mission to say that they must either hoist a British flag or leave Stamboul at once. But where procure one at a moment's notice? All the shops were closed, owing to the massacres, so that there was no possibility of buying one. It was a problem that taxed even the inventiveness of Ann Burgess. But a red bed-quilt, with Scripture verses stitched all over it, was found, and with trembling fingers the orphan children unpicked the texts from it, while the search for blue material continued. This could not be found, but a packet of blue dye was rubbed into some damp white calico, and red-and-white crosses were sewn into it.

[1] Hogarth Press.

This they attached to a broom-stick, and thrust it out of the window of the second floor. Only then did they realize, to their consternation, that it was a one-sided flag, so they tied a corner to the sun-shutter, making the flag look as if it had been blown there by the wind.

It was not long before the Turks arrived, with the order that the flag should be taken down at once. Miss Burgess smiled and told them that the British Consul desired it up. The officials, however, continued to reiterate the demand; Miss Burgess still smiled. They were slaughtering people, she told them, and if they slaughtered her they must do it under her flag.

"You will take it down when you want to?" asked one of the Turks at last.

"Exactly!" retorted Miss Burgess, and with that they had to be content.

Soon another party arrived, however, to ask if the British Consul had sent an official to hoist the flag, or if Miss Burgess had done it on her own initiative. Hiding her bewilderment as well as she could, she suggested their going to the Consulate itself for their information. They left her —but did not go to the Consulate!

The termination of the massacres brought no end to the problems which had to be faced. A new and seemingly unanswerable one reared its head: what was to be done with those who were left—three thousand widows alone after the 1896 riots? The majority of them did not even want to live. Most of the Armenian men left alive had fled the city; even Dr Dobrashian, the head of the mission, reluctantly left Constantinople to work in England.

Miss Burgess determined that work would prove a healing as well as an economic solution. The next step was—what kind of work? The question had a fairly obvious answer, for the Armenian women sewed exquisitely. To find the initial capital was more difficult, in a land where a

mere farthing might mean the difference between life and death to some poor creature.

Miss Burgess's powers of invention then came into play, and she designed a toy—like the Oriental swing bed called a 'salanjack'—which was so novel and attractive that it sold by the hundreds.

Making humorous toys or lace, embroidering—in an amazing way she gathered up the poor, bemused remnants of Armenian women, from babies to old crones, and set them all working at something that would sell in England, for the women were too terrified to have anything to do with their former Turkish employers or to go to market in the normal way, even if the Turks had continued to employ them.

So the time passed, measured by the little mission almost from massacre to massacre. In 1904 an inquiry was held in the British House of Commons about the seizure by the Kurds of Armenian cultivated lands. Much was hoped for from the party called the Young Turks. These actually did force constitutional government on the Sultan, but with disastrous results. The Powers withdrew, and a terrible reaction followed. In April 1909 the most frightful scenes were repeated, in which nearly a quarter of a million people lost their lives. Order was restored with difficulty, and for a whole year martial law was proclaimed in Constantinople.

Hardly had things begun to improve for the little mission when another cause for pandemonium descended—the Balkan War, in which Turkey found herself faced by a coalition who insisted on radical reforms. The opposition was strong enough to defeat her, but it did little to help the position of the Armenians. After the war Miss Burgess wrote:

> We are almost awestruck as we cast a backward glance over the scenes from which we have emerged—the awful combination of suffering caused by fires, earthquakes, wars, and

epidemics; the returning from the front of trainloads of wounded and dying soldiers; the thousands moving daily on to the front of all ranks to face the horrors of hunger, cold, disease, and death; the weird atmosphere of defiance created between the various races, creeds, and political parties; the paralysed condition of business centres, with general increasing poverty; the thousands of homes suffering from the loss of their bread-winners and women left with their little ones to face poverty and death . . . the almost endless procession of refugees fleeing from the disturbed towns and villages with their wagons and scanty possessions and as many of their cattle as they can bring with them in their haste, filling the mosques, school buildings, bath-houses, stables, cellars, camped outside city walls, filling the graveyards and miles of roads. In the cold wind and snow many died of exposure. . . . In the early part of the war we at the mission endured considerable strain. . . . War was being waged at the outer gates of Constantinople, and native Friends crowded into the mission house for shelter. But in all the tribulations, I may say, we had no time foolishly to muse on the seriousness of the situation, for as soon as the effects of the war were known funds from England began to flow in and new opportunities for reaching the sorrow-stricken masses became visible. Very soon thousands began to crowd round our doors. As soon as all the *mooajirs* were under cover small-pox broke out among the crowds, also scarlet fever, typhoid, and other diseases. In one of the mosques where I had been brought into close touch with smallpox the mother of the little sufferer noticed my concern for them all and for myself, and exclaimed, "Fear not! It is a harmless thing—*only* smallpox!"

In October 1913 the mission celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ann Burgess's arrival. The school premises were decorated, the Armenian Patriarch's carriage was sent to convey her thither, and one of the officials from the American Embassy made a touching speech: "Great men and warriors are not the only heroes the world knows. There are those who give their lives for suffering humanity. The greatness of a Themistocles, a Hannibal, a Napoleon, is

expressed through suffering and tears. But the greatness of a Miss Burgess consists in devotion to a mission whose object is the averting of suffering and the drying of tears."

In the very next year all previous riots and local skirmishes were dwarfed by the colossal catastrophe which fell, not only on Turkey, but on the whole of Europe.

The mission was now, of course, 'enemy property,' and the day school was very soon seized by the Turks for military barracks and the women put under arrest. All the English workers were forced to return to England, except two—Ann Burgess and her co-worker Anne Harris. All English property, except for the orphanage, was seized. The first thoughts of Ann Burgess were as usual practical. The work had to be saved! And it was saved! During the dark midnight hours the industrial goods were moved to the American mission house, and Mrs Morgenthau, the wife of the American Ambassador, came to their help and recovered from the Turks things already seized. The Ambassador himself actually called on Talaat Pasha and told him that the Friends were peaceable people, whose principles forbade them from taking part in war.

"They seem to be harmless fools," the Pasha replied. "They'd better remain and go on with their work."

At that period the mission had over a thousand pounds' worth of raw materials on their hands. This was handed out to the workers in as businesslike a fashion as possible, with the ultimate result that they produced over twelve thousand pounds' worth during the War, a large part of which was sold to the British army which went up from Salonika after the signing of the Armistice.

Ally or enemy, it was impossible to remain in that city of suffering without taking an active part in the care of the wounded, and Miss Burgess and her friend Anne Harris offered their services to the former British hospital, which

had been taken over by the American Red Cross. They were there for nine months—first ordered to leave, then allowed to stay, always unsure of what the morrow would bring forth, until at last they were turned out by the Turks and returned to the mission. But there the position was none too easy, and on one occasion Miss Burgess was summoned to the Central Police Station. This was the usual procedure before people were sent into exile. While she was being questioned by the chief police officials suddenly a message came through: "There has been a railway accident; your help is needed." Owing to this distraction Miss Burgess was allowed to return to the mission on a promise to come up again if called for. But the summons was never repeated.

During this period fires in the city were so frequent that orders went forth from the Turkish authorities that every one must protect his own house by a nightly organized watch. It was never safe to go to bed without obeying this rule, and Ann Burgess always took her turn at sitting up at night with a bucket of water ready to quench the flames should they start in their house. But on Good Friday 1917, just as she was preparing for bed, she saw a strange glare of light in her room—a fire spreading through the city. As she watched the flames spread towards the school building, a short distance from the mission house, where she was sleeping. There was a fresh breeze blowing, fanning the fire on and on. Powerless to do anything, she stood and watched the school burn until it was nothing but a pile of glowing ashes and nothing remained of the labour of years. There was not even the hope of any recompense, for no fire-insurance company had accepted the building, owing to the great risks.

In spite of the general panic during those fearful years Ann Burgess was permitted to remain free. But it was a situation which could be neither happy nor easy. Sorrow

and suffering were all around; food and materials for industrial work were obtainable only at fabulous prices; she had had no news from England for nearly three years, and only enemy versions of what was happening on the various fronts.

When the Peace Treaty was signed in 1918 it brought only fresh complications to the Armenians. The Turks, bitter with defeat, sought their revenge on a helpless nation, and the city was once more full of a never-ending stream of refugees, not only the Armenians from the Turks, but the White Russians from the Reds and the Turks themselves from the Greeks. The culmination of the situation came in the Smyrna massacre—one of the great post-War tragedies. The political and strategical developments which led up to it are too complicated to be described in detail. A post-War invasion by the Greeks against the Turks was defeated, and Christians in the evacuated districts sought refuge in flight, hastening in panic towards the coast. Smyrna was sacked by the Turks, and scenes enacted possible, one would imagine, only in the Dark Ages. People were outraged and massacred; 50,000 buildings were burned to the ground; while a whole host of victims huddled on the quay between the sea and a wall of fire were driven into the water. So frightful and widespread was this cataclysm that it was followed by a rush of refugees which resulted in the virtual clearance of the Christian population of Anatolia.

The reverberations of all this were naturally felt in Constantinople, where the situation had been becoming worse for some time, until at last there came a moment when Ann Burgess was forced to consider whether her greatest service to the Armenian race would not be to leave the city that had been her home for thirty-four years, for her very presence was in a measure a peril to the Christians, who, in their attempts to find shelter in the mission house as before, might meet their death.

So pressing was the danger that the Embassy advised her to leave at a day's notice, and on November 19, 1922, she, Anne Harris, and the other members of the staff assembled their belongings. For forty-eight hours they worked, packing up parcels of embroideries to send to England, emptying the factory of rug-looms and furniture. Finding a ship bound for the island of Corfu, they decided to go. With one hundred and thirty of the workers, all laden with as many of their personal possessions as they could carry in bundles, they set out during a terrible snow-blizzard, but, although this in some ways added to their difficulties, it hid their movements from the Turks, who were all under shelter. At the quay they found the boat waiting for them, and trooped on board.

Imagine Ann Burgess's consternation, however, when a telegram from England was handed to her saying, "You may take only thirty people." There was insufficient money forthcoming to pay for the rest. For a moment her heart failed. How could she send those people to whom she had promised liberation back to the terror-stricken town, to be sent into exile in the Syrian Desert or to Mesopotamia, or to be massacred in the streets? As she stood, perplexed and anxious, a child ran up to her with two letters, saying, "A gentleman came some while ago and left these letters, which he took from the post-office for you." The first contained a cheque for one hundred pounds, the second one for five hundred, the latter from a well-wisher who wrote that a message from God to "send Miss Burgess £500" had come to her with such persistence that she had done so! The miracle is that when the accounts of the cost of repatriation were added up they came to within a few shillings of that total sum.

By the beginning of December 1922 all Miss Burgess's women and children had landed at Corfu. The first few weeks were difficult. December is an inhospitable month,

even in Greece, and no provision or shelter was awaiting the refugees. Many of the mission goods had been lost in the sea while unloading or ruined by rain on the quay. Only one building in the whole island seemed available to house them, and this was granted.

As usual Miss Burgess's immediate thought was work. She hunted round for a building for their rug-looms, and after many fruitless efforts was offered an old church that required a new roof. The new Governor of the city disapproved, and had them turned out—perhaps just as well, for the floor was about four feet in water when the spring rains came. Earners were better than beggars in the place, however, it was obvious, and eventually an old warehouse was found at a small rent and their looms set up there.

As more refugees poured into the island Miss Burgess's task became more and more difficult. Mud, snow, and rain were general—so rare a climatic phenomenon that the superstitious declared that the Armenians had brought it from Turkey. The fortress was crowded with people—nothing to mark the boundaries between families but bundles of clothing. Sickness spread and became rampant.

In spite of it all the industrial work progressed: Armenian carpenters made the furniture, cobblers the shoes, needlewomen embroidery; many were set to work on rugs, others at Persian printed cottons.

But the resentment of the islanders grew, and when the refugees had been there about eighteen months the Governor ordered the police to gather them together and send them off. Wild with terror, the workers ran to the rug factory and hid themselves. There was only one thing to do, and perhaps only one woman who could have done it —Ann Burgess. Without hesitation she went to the Governor of Corfu and managed to convince him that an industrial concern with a turnover of five thousand pounds a year

brought wealth to the island, not greater need. The order to deport the refugees was countermanded.

In 1932, nearly fifty years since the doctors had 'given her up,' they forbade Ann Mary Burgess to go on working. They told her that she must not do this, could not do that. As before she disproved their statements by disobeying them, so that in 1935 she was still working at new designs, new toys, in Athens, and still, as she once signed herself in a letter to her fellow-Friends in England, "yours, sometimes perplexed, but only for a season when faith trembles, Ann Mary Burgess."

CHAPTER XVII

MY FRIENDS THE FELLĀḤĪN

Collecting Folklore in the Egyptian Desert

HERE is a very unusual picture. Imagine a camp in the Egyptian desert—a little oasis of life and busyness in an arid, waterless stretch of sand. On the right-hand sweep of the horizon is a broken line, which indicates a high plateau; on the left a green line, which is probably the cultivated area round a village.

Two men are approaching the camp on the backs of donkeys. They are *fellāḥīn*—that is, peasants of the Egyptian agricultural class, a class with five thousand years of history behind it. They have been invited to the camp by an Englishwoman from an outside world that has no place in their conceptions, let alone their knowledge, but they are dignified, friendly, and quite unselfconscious. They greet each other on arrival as etiquette demands: the woman claps her hands for coffee to be brought, it is sipped in a leisurely way, and then the two men seat themselves on the ground, cross-legged, draw their blue robes around them, and the little group waits for one of the men to begin. For he is an amateur story-teller, and has been asked there to recite.

After a few minutes' reflection he asks the English hostess if she would care to hear the tale entitled "The Ideas of Women are Superior to those of Men," for, simple though the class from which he is drawn—he is a dyer by trade, as his blue-stained hands make evident—he is not without an idea of how to pay a subtle compliment. Approval duly given, he begins with the time-honoured opening: "Once upon a time a judge had a wife who was always telling him that

he invariably gave judgment in favour of men and never of women. . . ."

The tale finished, he begins another, and another, and another. Four hours go by before the little party breaks up. Farewells are exchanged, appointments made for another meeting, and the woman goes to write down immediately in her notebook tales which have been handed down by word of mouth for hundreds of years—perhaps stories which had been told to Herodotus himself when he was visiting Egypt more than two thousand years ago.

Herodotus has been called by many names. Some term him "the father of history." Others say that he was too much given to 'spinning yarns,' to put it nicely, to be dignified by such a title. Professor R. R. Marett calls him "the father of anthropology," and says that Miss Winifred Blackman—the Englishwoman in the tent—is his intellectual descendant. She is certainly one of his most profound admirers, for one of her invariable companions in a spot where possessions and luggage are counted by the ounce, and where there are no libraries or bookshops to enable one to indulge a changeable taste, is a volume of Herodotus.

The majority of twentieth-century scientists who are interested in Egypt are concerned with solving the mysteries of her enthralling past—her ancient history, her monuments, her tombs, her dead. They have, for the most part, ignored her living present. Miss Blackman came to the conclusion, after much investigation and study, that a valuable avenue of approach to an understanding of the past was being neglected; she decided to explore it.

To carry out this decision to the full was by no means as easy as might be imagined. It meant actually becoming part of that living present—no easy thing for a stranger of another race. For to become part of a people, one *of* them and *with* them, is a very different thing from going round

with a notebook and jotting down observations in it. As Professor Marett so truly says:

> The ideal collector of folklore must have a genius for hob-nobbing. From lettered priest to unlettered peasant, all classes of the population must be on gossiping terms with him. . . . If the soul of the people is to be revealed they must be overheard as, all unconscious of the presence of the stranger, they fuss and chatter about the affairs of the hour—about the prices of the market and the state of the crops, about yesterday's funeral and to-morrow's wedding, about the donkey's sore back and the sore eyes of the baby. . . . The folklorist should be capable of melting like a disembodied spirit into the atmosphere of the local life.

This is precisely what Miss Blackman set herself to do, and what she has, indeed, succeeded in doing for fifteen consecutive years—metaphorically, if not literally! She has gossiped with the *fellāḥīn*—about their ailments, their babies, their love affairs. She has gossiped, moreover, without her tongue in her cheek. Such lack of sincerity would have rendered her work far less valuable, for, as she said to me, "They may be able to take you in, but you can't take *them* in. They'll sense exactly what your feelings for them are. The *fellāḥīn* in general are extraordinarily psychic, and they know exactly whom they can trust and how far."

Fortunately Miss Blackman had more than a mere liking for them: she had a real natural affection for them. She loved their ready wit, their fondness for a joke, their light-heartedness, kindliness, and hospitality. She admired their cheerfulness and contentedness in their hard, monotonous lives. And she had, lastly, one great advantage in her favour: she was a woman! In a world where most of the assets in pursuing a career are supposed to belong to men it is heartening to meet some one who has been helped, instead of hindered, by this fact.

The advantage thus given is due partly to the fact that



WINIFRED BLACKMAN, THE "SHEIKHEH OF HEALING,"
PACKING MEDICINES FOR EGYPT
"Daily Mirror" photo

the majority of the *fellāḥīn* belong to the Moslem religion, although there are many Copts among them, and the women of this religion are kept in the strictest seclusion by their laws. Miss Blackman was enabled as a woman to go where no man would ever be allowed—to be present at ceremonies, to be a witness of rites and festivals from which a man would be definitely excluded. It is the women who are the conservers of the old customs, the tellers of the old tales, the jealous keepers of the old traditions, and the strongest forces in influencing the rising generation. Miss Blackman met them and talked with them as one woman with another, and a bond of sympathy was immediately established.

To live in such a way it was, of course, necessary for Miss Blackman to separate herself entirely from the conventional European colonies in Egypt. Sometimes she made her home in Cairo, sometimes in isolated Egyptian villages on the fringe of the desert. She has lived for months in a tent, or in a rest-house lent to her by the Department of Irrigation. When she began her work in the field she went to a little village in the Fayum. There the upper floor of a typical Egyptian house was placed at her disposal, and she inhabited it for five months.

Such a house has not changed much since the days of ancient Egypt. Then, as to-day, it had one or more upper stories white- or colour-washed, a brick staircase leading to the roof, with its mud granaries and *malakif*, or ventilators for conveying the north and south winds into the house during the hot weather.

Miss Blackman's particular house stood on a high mound formed by the *débris* of earlier buildings, and through her windows, unglazed but shuttered, she could look over the tops of neighbouring village houses, watch the varied life on the roofs, and hear the call to prayer chanted five times daily by the *mueddin*.

The interesting thing is that wherever Miss Blackman has found herself, remote as her temporary home has often been, in native villages the inhabitants of which hardly knew what a European looked like, she has always been accorded the most perfect courtesy—even through a period when Cairo was troubled by anti-European disturbances and murders occurred every day.

She had been in her Fayum village for only a few hours, for instance, when the *'omdeh*, or headman of the village, sent his card and asked when he might be permitted to call on her. She replied by inviting him to breakfast on the following day, an appointment which not only he, but an escort of relations and a village guard, kept! After breakfast he returned the compliment by inviting her to luncheon at his house, where in due course she found a concourse of people waiting to greet her. An hour passed—no lunch. As principal guest she followed the etiquette of the country by announcing that she was now ready for the meal to be served. However, two or three more hours went by before it was forthcoming, when it proved to be a banquet so elaborate that she was surprised that it had not taken days to prepare. She was able to do such scant justice to it (with many apologies for her small and womanly appetite) that people held up their hands in amazement, saying, "How does she live?"

At this little village of el-Lahun she was extremely happy. Hospitality was showered on her, and other attentions more embarrassing. The villagers had never before come into close contact with any Englishwoman, and every article of her dress was commented on, as well as her personal appearance. "See, she has the eyes of a cat!" they said—a great compliment! "How beautiful is the colour of her cheeks!" When she fell ill with fever for the second time her attendant was convinced that she was suffering from the evil eye, and he therefore harangued the villagers and told them that,

although all that they said was true, such remarks were not to be made without such protecting phrases as *Ma sha' Allah* ("What God willeth is") and many others of a like kind. The next time she went out it was to the accompaniment of a Greek chorus of such phrases.

Severe academic qualifications are necessary for really first-class scientific work such as Miss Blackman was doing in the field. She had them. She first took a diploma in anthropology at Oxford University; she became a research student there; then an assistant for many years at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, under Mr Henry Balfour; then Librarian in the Department of Social Anthropology, under Professor Marett. She was also fortunate to have for brother a distinguished Egyptologist—a specialist in hieroglyphics. In spite of such initial advantages, there was much to learn when she got out to the field, and many trials, not the least of which was the mastery of Arabic—not only one dialect of it, but several, so that for many months she dared not travel to the villages without a comprehensive dictionary under her arm.

Miss Blackman went to Egypt with the supreme advantage of a strong innate sympathy for the people and the country; by some fortunate coincidence she was endowed by the *fellāḥīn* with another—*barakeh*. *Barakeh* is a quality occasionally found in living people—much more often in antique objects—which enables the owner to bring blessing, good luck, or healing virtue to those with whom he or she comes into contact.

For this reason Miss Blackman was speedily visited by innumerable suppliants for as many causes. One of the most common conditions she was begged to cure was childlessness, among the simple *fellāḥīn* a great reproach.

One day a young married woman came to see her in a state almost verging on madness. If no prospect of a family appeared she suspected that her husband would

divorce her. She begged and entreated Miss Blackman to help her. Miss Blackman politely suggested stepping over the blue glazed charms which are ordinarily used for such a purpose.

Three such attempts, however, proving futile, she once again visited Miss Blackman. "O gracious lady, I know you *can* help me if you will. We all know you have so much *barakeh!*" Miss Blackman could not withhold her sorrow and sympathy, and managed to send her away comforted. She was, however, more than surprised when she heard that her 'patient' had hopes of becoming a mother.

It was not long before she met a much more inconvenient belief. Expectant mothers in Egypt (sometimes in England also) believe that what they gaze at for any length of time will affect their unborn children. Highly coloured and old-fashioned illustrations torn from English magazines are often stuck to the walls of the huts for this reason. But what is the mere paper reproduction to flesh-and-blood reality? Hence the rigid stares for hours on end at Miss Blackman when she happened to be visiting a village which contained expectant mothers, as all villages did.

"Ah," said one woman thus engaged, "if I had a girl like her I could marry her for a hundred pounds!"

"Look well, O girl," replied Miss Blackman's servant, "and if you are in a state of yearning you may have one like her."

Egyptians love children, and birth is a great festival of rejoicing and thanksgiving, with extremely interesting ceremonies. Miss Blackman was present at many such occasions, and in her book *The Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt*[1] she gives a description of a typical one.

When she arrived at the house of the family she was first conducted on to the roof. A ram had been purchased for sacrifice, and the wretched animal was also there, awaiting

[1] Harrap.

the butcher, who presently arrived. "*Bismillah er-Rahman er-Rahim*" ("In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful"), said the man, and slit the beast's throat—one of the few occasions on which Miss Blackman closed her eyes and blocked up her ears. In due course the carcass was skinned, while the child's mother and other female relatives set to work to prepare the meat and cook it for the other guests, who would arrive later in the evening.

At 7 P.M., after a short rest, Miss Blackman returned to the house. The seat of honour had been reserved for her, coffee was brought, and she, in her turn, gave her servant a number of boxes of cigarettes to hand round. In the meantime a sheikh celebrated for his excellent chanting of the Koran arrived with his assistants, and when every available seat on benches and floor had been taken began to recite.

Placing one hand against the side of his face (just as you may see in ancient Egyptian drawings) and swaying in rhythmic accompaniment to his chanting, he worked himself up until he was finally standing on a high bench. The audience was as stirred as himself. "*Ya sheikh!*" they cried. "*Aiwa, keda!*" ("Yes, thus!"), while one man tore off his turban and clasped the sheikh by the knees, others following his example.

The performance went on until midnight, when Miss Blackman's departure broke up the assembly.

Birth and death are the great excitements in the monotonous life of the Egyptian peasant, and the rites and ceremonies connected with them are innumerable. Once when Miss Blackman was staying in a small village in the Fayum a visitor brought the news of the death of a poor but much respected Copt living in an adjacent village, and suggested that his relations and friends would much appreciate a visit from her.

Such a compliment—and a valuable compliment at that—could not be ignored. Miss Blackman therefore started

off on her donkey for the village. It was quite easy to identify the house of mourning, for a number of men were seated outside in almost complete silence. In an inner apartment women were uttering piercing cries of grief. A sister of the dead man rose and conducted Miss Blackman into a further room, in which the corpse, covered with a coloured sheet, was stretched. Drawing aside the coverlet, the sister invited Miss Blackman to take a seat on the mattress beside the dead man—a delicate compliment which was firmly refused.

In the other room a continuous wailing and waving of coloured kerchiefs was maintained by the women, somewhat, it appeared, to the disapproval of the men relatives. Did they do such things in Oxford, the latter asked Miss Blackman. No, she told them; all was kept quiet there. "*Ahsan, ahsan khalis!*" ("Better, much better!") they replied.

The women, however, completely disregarded the men's opinions, and their exhibitions of grief became more and more frantic, so that by the time the men had placed the corpse in the coffin they had worked themselves up into hysterics, hammering on the lid and shrieking, until Miss Blackman begged the men to make haste about their departure.

Hoisting the coffin on to the back of a donkey, the little procession (including Miss Blackman) set off for a Coptic monastery in the desert, leaving the women still shrieking in the rear. There was no sign of a priest when they reached the monastery, but after a seat of honour close by the corpse had been given to Miss Blackman the men beguiled the time by talking and smoking. At last the priest arrived, extended his hand for Miss Blackman to shake and the others to kiss, and began the service, which lasted for three hours. After interminable readings and chantings and singing a long funeral oration was spoken, the candles

put out, the lid replaced on the coffin, and the coffin taken to the place of burial outside—a final step which was not accomplished without much loud-voiced and conflicting advice from the crowd round the vault.

On the third day after the death the priest goes to the house to 'dismiss the soul,' so some believe. Miss Blackman was also invited to this ceremony, and found the women wailing as before, but managing to smoke cigarettes as they did so.

One of the most amazing branches of research which Miss Blackman has studied is that dealing with magicians and magic. Egypt has always been famous as a home of 'magicians.' Pharaoh's magicians, who matched their skill against Moses, have their counterpart in these modern days, and the fairy-tale happenings of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* are by no means incredible to the simple *fellāḥīn*. In many villages the magician is as much a part of the community as the doctor in our own, and often combines the practice of medicine with that of magic.

The profession of magician is often an hereditary one: it may be followed by either man or woman. The magician may be employed in all sorts of situations—to heal cases of 'sheikh-possession,' to find hidden treasure, to win husbands or wives for the unloved, to bring a man or woman from a distance, to find thieves, or even to injure an enemy. Since his wonder-working powers may be employed for evil no less than good, the villagers fear as well as respect him, and do all they can to propitiate him. In the main they work through spells and charms—sometimes handed down from father to son—a method of procedure which seems very childish and absurd to us, but which has surprisingly efficacious results on occasions—perhaps because of the susceptible mentality of the *fellāḥīn*.

Sometimes magicians are supposed to be possessed by sheikhs, used in this case to denote supernatural beings who

live, as the people say, beneath the earth, though they come up from time to time and enter into people—sometimes men, sometimes women. Miss Blackman knew one female magician who, when anyone came to her for help, would, as she expressed it, call on her sheikh, who would go beneath the earth for a suitable spell or charm.

Miss Blackman once had an opportunity of seeing this woman at work, for one of her village friends had a pain in her head and went to the magician for a cure.

The magician's house soon became packed with sight-seers come to witness the *séance*: they even blocked the window aperture. A fairly clean mat was found for Miss Blackman to sit on, and the magician and patient squatted on the mud floor close beside her. Then the procedure began. First the magician took the kerchief from her patient's head, folded it, knotted it, and sat on it. Suddenly her whole body began to shake violently, her face changed, her voice, attitude, and behaviour became distinctly masculine. She told the patient that she must visit a certain well many miles away from the village. Might she not go to a well in the magician's own village, pleaded the sick woman, but, no, the request was sternly refused.

Miss Blackman did not follow the further history of the case, but the *séance* terminated in characteristic Egyptian manner. The magician (or rather her sheikh Muhammed) declared that he had fallen in love with Miss Blackman and wished to marry her—a declaration which was received with the greatest joy and amusement by the assembled villagers.

Sheikh-possession is a frequent phenomenon in modern Egypt. People believe that the sheikhs may be good or bad: if the former, they will assist the person they possess; if the latter, they will require to be appeased constantly. A man or woman may even be possessed by several sheikhs of both sexes—a somewhat complicated state which the magician is inevitably called in to cure.

Generally he tells the friends or relatives of the afflicted person that a *zar* is necessary. A *zar* is a ceremony at which certain songs are sung, drums beaten, and incense burned. Miss Blackman knew one woman who, after being overcome by the belief in such possession, lost the use of both legs, which swelled to an unusual size. Her brother therefore arranged a *zar*, and brought musicians with drums and tambourines along to the house. In the middle of it all the patient suddenly got up and began to dance, so that her brother and friends inquired of the 'sheikh' what he desired of her.

"I want nothing," was the reply.

"Why should you make her unhappy, then?" they inquired, to which the reply was given, "She was always sitting about and unhappy because her children died, so I came into her."

So they again asked, "What do you want," and this time the answer came, "I want silver anklets and nice clothes, and she must not be miserable."

Officials in Egypt are trying to stamp out the ceremony, for the influence of the belief is obviously an exceedingly harmful one. It is no wonder that they often have the approval of husbands, who are put to great expense and bother when their wives suppose themselves to be thus affected—a supposition which approximates frequently to blackmail, whether unconscious or not!

The *ginn* (good spirit) and *'afarit* (demons) of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* are among the various supernatural beings who still figure conspicuously in the life of the Egyptian peasant, and on one of her sojourns at a rest-house placed at her disposal her servants recounted to Miss Blackman in terror three appearances, in various forms, of *'afarit* in the garden, which, incidentally, was supposed to be haunted.

For four years, from 1930 to 1934, Miss Blackman worked

in Upper Egypt, collecting magico-medical specimens for the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in London. One of the interesting facts which experts were able to prove on careful examination of a second collection she made was that in almost every case the drug was useful for the purpose prescribed, even when it was linked with some magical charm!

The specimens she obtained with the help of all sorts of people—not only medicine-men and -women, but such varied characters as peasants, sheikhs, and 'wise women,' or *sittat beta' el bakht*. When she had a house in Cairo among her most frequent and valued visitors were these 'ladies of the luck,' as they are called, with their large baskets containing magical cures and apparatus for telling fortunes, such as sand and male and female shells. People of all classes and degrees have been to that house to sell her curiosities—thieves and robbers, some of them have been rudely but justly called—yet she has never missed even a pin, and declares that she has never paid more than a just price for any article.

One of the most interesting 'cures' is brought about by tattooing, in the belief of the *fellāḥīn*, and Miss Blackman collected no fewer than 150 designs, each one of which was for some particular illness. Some of these she has traced back to ancient Egypt—as, for example, the representation of a fish, which was first employed in the Middle Kingdom, two thousand or more years B.C.—and have provided some extraordinarily interesting evidence of culture contacts and racial migrations.

The medical notion behind this work may, she believes, be due to the fact that blood is drawn away from the body in the process of tattooing, and may thus cause temporary relief. Be that as it may, although some of the older generation have hardly a square inch left on their bodies without a design, the practice is dying out among the younger generation.

Before the onrush of twentieth-century mechanical civilization, which is penetrating even the Egyptian desert, the old ways are fading. Strong as is their belief in their 'magicians,' with their spells and charms and drugs, Miss Blackman's own medicine-chest proved an even more potent attraction wherever she took it. She has literally been besieged by sufferers from all sorts of ailments, severe and slight. On occasions she has treated no fewer than a hundred a day—an occupation which keeps her busy, but which brings her into sympathetic contact with the people as nothing else could do. This contact she uses not only to aid her scientific researches, but to distribute as much propaganda for cleanliness and hygiene as possible. And perhaps of all the titles which have been bestowed on her the one which she appreciates most of all is *Sheikheh Shifa*—the "Sheikheh of Healing."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE COUNTRY ROUND THE CORNER

Some Arctic Experiences of Olive Murray Chapman

TOURISTS coming down Snowdon late one afternoon met some children going up, and warned them that they would be benighted. The children laughed and went on. That was just what they wanted—to spend the night on top of Snowdon—and that is just what they did. They camped out in the shelter, and thoroughly enjoyed the adventure.

The leader of the party, then fourteen years old, was the girl who is now Mrs Chapman.

Some people are born with the urge for exploration. Even as children they will defy their nurses in an effort to see what is round the next corner.

To Mrs Chapman the country round the corner was always a fascination, and at quite an early age she had an opportunity of satisfying this urge by an expedition through Kashmir into the barren magnificence of Western Tibet. She rode over the great pass known as the Zoji La, along a path which is a mere ledge cut into the side of a terrific precipice.

She had no thrilling adventures, but might have had one if her pony had not been a wise beast. The party had to cross a snow bridge over a mountain torrent. She was last, but her clever mount, after looking at the tracks where the others had passed in safety, refused to follow, and insisted on crossing higher up. The pony had realized—what his mistress did not know—that the bridge was no longer able to bear their weight.

In 1929 Mrs Chapman went to Iceland. Many people go

to Iceland for fishing and sightseeing, but this journey was on a different plan. She landed in the south of the island, rode round the west coast, and then straight across to the extreme north. Her journey took her quite away from the tourist trail, and she crossed many miles of wild country, which had seldom—perhaps never—before been seen by an Englishwoman.

The chief risk attached to this trip was crossing occasional swift and unbridged rivers, some of which are very dangerous, by reason of quicksand in their beds, but she came through without anything worse than an occasional ducking, and brought back a wonderful collection of photographs and water-colour paintings. The only big risk she took, and that unknown to her at the time, was when she explored the active volcanic region near Myvatn, in the north-east. She walked across a wide stretch of volcanic soil full of vents, where steam and hot gases are forced through cracks in the earth, and did not learn until later that at any moment the crust might have broken and dropped her into the burning inferno beneath.

The success of this journey and of the book she wrote about it fired our traveller with the desire to explore Lapland. Here, again, is a country parts of which are visited in summer by fishermen, who find excellent sport in the many rivers and lakes. But Mrs Chapman decided to go in winter. Her friends were amazed.

"You'll freeze," they said. "Lapland reaches beyond the Arctic Circle. Even the sea freezes on the coasts. Why not wait till summer?"

"Because I want to see the Lapps," was the answer. And it was a good answer. The summer tourist never sees the Lapps, except for a few who are more or less 'on show.' The real Lapp is up in the mountains in summer with his reindeer. It is only in winter that it is possible to mix with and picture the Lapp in his home.

In Iceland Mrs Chapman had taken many photographs, but now she was more ambitious. She decided to make a film, and with that idea purchased a small but excellent 30-millimetre *ciné*-camera, and spent several weeks at practising how to work it. She visited a Swedish travel bureau to make arrangements for her journey, but met with small encouragement.

"Lapland in winter!" exclaimed the official in charge. "Don't you know that the cold is so great that even breathing is difficult? Are you not aware that the only way of travelling is by reindeer and sledge, and that there are blizzards which make journeys not only difficult, but very dangerous? What you propose is an adventure, not a tourist journey. We cannot help you or be responsible."

Next the would-be traveller tried the Norwegian Legation, only to get equally cold comfort. Then by good luck she met a Swedish lady, who gave her an introduction to Lensmann Hegge, the Norwegian police official in charge of Lapps in the Karasjok district. She wrote to him, and obtained all the details she required. He advised her as to stores and clothing, and promised sledges, reindeer, and a Lapp fur dress. On February 14, 1931, she sailed from Newcastle, taking her precious camera, a Kodak, painting materials, some bead necklaces from Woolworth's as presents for the Lapps, and a package of coloured balls for their children.

Iceland merely fringes the Arctic Circle, but Hammerfest, where our traveller's ship landed her, is a long way north of Iceland. It is the most northerly town in Europe, and there the sun shines without setting from May 14 to July 30. There are no trees, although a few miles to the south is an island where some stunted birches constitute the farthest north forest. From Hammerfest Mrs Chapman went by a small cargo-boat to Alta, near Bossekop. There was a heavy storm, followed by a bright sky, across which

flickered the pale yellow streamers of the Northern Lights.

In spite of its northern latitude, most of the Norwegian coast is kept clear of ice by the warmth of the Gulf Stream, even in the depths of winter, but in the Alten Fiord the temperature was far below zero, and the sea was freezing rapidly. Two men who wished to land at a port near Alta in a newly purchased rowing-boat had to walk and pull their boat behind them over the ice. Alta, however, was still ice-free, and here were real Lapps, small gnome-like people, and a capital little inn known as Wiig's Hotel.

Up here the sun reappears at the end of January, and by the beginning of March there are eight or nine hours of daylight. It was a bright morning when Mrs Chapman walked down to the market where Lapps were arriving with laden sledges. The reindeer lay down in the snow and were fed with ren-moss, dry, brittle stuff which grows everywhere. They are useful animals, for they require no drink in winter. If thirsty they eat snow. Every part of the animal is of some value to its owner. The Lapps eat the meat, drink the milk, wear the skin. The sinews are used for surgical thread, the hair for stuffing lifebelts, while even the bones are carved into knife-handles and other objects.

A wealthy Lapp will own a thousand or more reindeer, but a herd may number twelve thousand. Each owner marks his calves by notches cut in their ears. As a rule they are kind to their beasts, and cases of cruelty are very rare. Indeed, there is very little crime among the Lapps. Their chief failing is occasionally getting drunk.

While waiting for her guide and sledge Mrs Chapman practised ski-ing. One day she wore a knitted sports cap, instead of her usual leather helmet, and suddenly discovered that she had no feeling in one ear. It was frost-bitten, and she had to rub it hard with snow before she was aware that she had an ear at all. That night the whole heavens were

alive with darting streaks of golden flame. At one time there was an immense arc of yellow light in the north, with sword-like points shooting upward from it. A display like this, she was told, often heralds a storm, and, sure enough, that night a furious north-easterly gale blew, bringing clouds of hard-frozen snow. The inn shook with the fury of the gale.

On the following day the Lapp dress sent by Lensmann Hegge arrived. There were leggings, shoes, gloves, and a fur pesk, or overcoat. The outfit was beautifully warm, but much too big for Mrs Chapman, who, as you may see by her picture, is not a tall woman. Then came the reindeer and the pulkas. The pulka is a small one-man sledge. In shape it is canoe-like. You sit flat in it, leaning against a back-rest. It is about six feet long, but only six inches deep. Its shape has not varied for hundreds—perhaps thousands —of years. The reindeer that pulls it has only a single rein fastened to a halter round the animal's head. The rein hangs on the near side. A whip is never used. These deer are trained to obey a flick of the rein or the voice.

Driving a reindeer is, however, a tricky business, for the animals are often only half broken, while it is no easy matter to balance oneself in the canoe-shaped pulka. To begin with Mrs Chapman's steed was fastened with a long rope to the back of her guide's sledge. He was a Lapp with the odd name of Per Matheson Gaup. He spoke a little Norwegian, but no English.

It was late in the day when our traveller, with her guide, got away, and an icy wind faced them as they began to climb into the hills. As the light failed the scene was a gloomy one, and from the distance came a howling which might have been dogs, but was more likely wolves. Snow began to fall, and with it came a thick mist, making it very difficult to see the posts which are set up by a kindly Government for the benefit of travellers. The snow was so deep

there was no sign of the track, and even the posts were sometimes quite buried. Up hill and down, then across a great frozen lake four miles long and 1200 feet above sea-level! The wind was terrific, and the poor traveller was feeling dreadfully sick, while her nose was bleeding from the cold and the rarefied air.

It was not until half-past ten that the Lapps at last pulled up at a wooden hut. Mrs Chapman managed to get inside, but she was far too unwell to light her stove or to make tea. There were two rooms in the place, and suddenly a man appeared from the other door. He was a Norwegian forester, a capital fellow who gave the weary traveller some of his own coffee, which soon revived her. These huts are called *fjellstue*, and are built by the Government at distances thirty miles apart. Each is in charge of a Lapp, who is supposed to keep it tidy and cut firewood. This one was clean and tidy, but some of the others were in very different condition.

On the next morning it was colder than ever. The mist was still thick, and as the day went on the wind grew stronger and more bitter. Snow began to fall again. Mrs Chapman covered her face with a shawl, which soon froze stiff. The snow grew deeper, the reindeer came down to a plodding walk, while the storm developed into a veritable blizzard. In the dim light the snow whirled in great gusts. They came to another lake, the Storvatn. It is seven miles from side to side, and the wind shrieked across it like a mad thing, while the temperature was now many degrees below zero. It became pitch dark, and the traveller was almost numb with cold. The sledge came to a standstill. The reindeer lay down. When they have done what they think enough they lie down and, like the overworked camel, refuse to move.

"I pictured a night out in the blizzard in a dugout of snow," says Mrs Chapman, "and found the prospect far from pleasing. At the next moment, to my great relief,

Per was bending over me, shouting in my ear, '*Mollesjok fjellstue!*'"

The hut was a one-room place, dirty and fireless, but was welcome shelter, for the blizzard developed into the worst storm of the whole winter, a storm in which the mail-boat *Hera* was wrecked near Hammerfest, six people being lost, with all the mails and cargo. It lasted all that night and all the next day, and it is certain that no person caught in the open could have survived.

An old chronicler of the seventeenth century writes of these storms:

> They drive the snow with such force and quantity that if any person be surprised abroad he hath no other remedy than to throw himself on the ground with some garment over him, suffering himself to be quite buried in the snow till the storm is past.

Lapps caught in a blizzard do this very thing. They turn their pulka on edge, to make a windbreak, and trust to their furs and pesk to keep them from freezing. But all depends on how long the storm lasts. One like that which Mrs Chapman encountered, lasting for thirty-six hours, would be too much even for a Lapp.

After the blizzard the weather was better, and, travelling slowly through enormous drifts, the little party reached the small town of Karasjok, where there was an inn and a post-office, and where the Hegges lived. Seated in Fru Hegge's parlour, drinking coffee from a dainty china cup, it was hard to believe that this was the Arctic. Here Mrs Chapman had a new Lapp dress made. The blue stuff for the dress was hand-woven and beautifully embroidered. The complete fur outfit—pesk, leggings, shoes, gloves, and hood—cost less than £8.

She visited the Government school, where Lapp children are educated, and presented some of her balls to the boys and bead necklaces to the girls. They were enraptured, and

afterwards the entire juvenile population followed her round the village.

A Norwegian friend took her up into the hills to see some mountain Lapps who lived in a single-roomed hut. The old grandfather sat in the only chair, which he at once offered to the lady. There were several young men, two women, and some dogs. One of the young Lapps was much taken with the visitor, and after asking Mrs Chapman's Norwegian friend her name, her age, and a number of other questions suddenly proposed marriage.

"Tell her," he said, "that I am very rich. I have a thousand reindeer. Tell her that she will be part-owner of my thousand reindeer if she will become my wife."

When he was told that his kind suggestion could not be accepted he broke into a melancholy chant, words to which he improvised. All that Mrs Chapman could understand of it were the words 'Englantina Olive.' There is not much sentiment among the Lapps. Their marriages are purely 'of convenience.' The richest man gets the best choice of marriageable girls.

Before leaving Karasjok Mrs Chapman took some lessons in driving. As we have already said, it is no easy matter to drive a reindeer. The single rein has to be tied round the driver's arm, for if the pulka upsets the deer usually bolts with the sledge and leaves him stranded, an awkward business if he is out in the wilds miles from anywhere. The first start ended in a spill. The reindeer went off at a gallop, swerved, upset the pulka, and Mrs Chapman was spilled in the snow. Later, when she left Karasjok, she had a worse spill. The road was down a steep hill, and the reindeer galloped so that the sledge swayed and bumped violently. Finally it went over, and the driver, tied fast to the rein, was dragged helplessly through the snow. Luckily the guide, who was ahead, was able to stop the animal, or the consequences might have been serious. *Going downhill*

one must use the feet to brake, just as one does in a toboggan. That day she had four more upsets, but luckily was none the worse for them.

They came to a river, the Jesjokka, up which they drove. The Jesjokka is very swift, and in summer is a boiling torrent. Though it was now frozen and for the most part covered with thick ice, it was still dangerous, for, as the guide said, there are places where it never freezes, and others where a skim of ice covers treacherous whirlpools. Yet sledge-drivers use it regularly in winter, for otherwise they have to make a long *détour* over high hills.

Presently Mrs Chapman heard a loud roar, and, rounding the next curve, saw water spouting out of a great hole in the ice. Happily her guide knew the river and all its danger-spots thoroughly, and by keeping close to the bank they came safely to the road again.

But the day was not to end without trouble. Dusk was falling when they left the river and struck across country towards the *fjellstue* at Avjuarre, where they were to spend the night. On the way they passed some Lapp huts, from which a number of dogs rushed out, barking furiously and frightening the reindeer. Mrs Chapman was busy trying to steady her beast when suddenly she felt a great weight on her right arm. One of the dogs, a fierce-eyed brute resembling the Arctic huskies of North America, had sprung upon the pulka and seized her arm in its teeth. Owing to the thickness of the fur it failed to get its fangs into her flesh, but, growling savagely, tore at her pesk, ripping the fur from shoulder to wrist.

The owner, with some other Lapps, hearing her cries, came running out and began to pelt the dog with stones. This made things rather worse than before, for now the driver was in danger of being brained by the stones. One must have hit the dog, for he let go, but only to circle round and make a fresh attack from behind. Mrs Chapman had

no whip or any other weapon, and her guide was too far ahead to be of any help. More stones came hurtling through the air, and the reindeer, terrified, broke into a furious gallop. The pulka swung from side to side, and its driver fully expected to be upset and left to the mercy of the great wolf-like brute. In sheer desperation she managed to keep her balance, and sighed with relief as the dog lost its hold and rolled in the snow. It was a nasty experience, and Mrs Chapman was very grateful to reach her night's shelter, unpack her food-box, and cook her evening meal. All Arctic dogs are apt to be savage, but these Lapp dogs are nothing like so bad as the huskies belonging to the Indians of the Labrador coast, which have been known to pull down women and children and eat them.

The Lapp dog is a good friend to his master. One day, later, Mrs Chapman was going for a run on skis when she came upon a dog in a terrible state of excitement. It was licking the face of a man lying in the snow, trying to rouse him. The man was dead drunk, and, left where he was, would have frozen to death. There were some huts not far off, and as Mrs Chapman was deciding to go for help an old man came out, reached the drunken man, and dragged him away to his hut, followed by the now delighted dog.

Kautokeino was the next stop, reached after a struggle through another heavy snowstorm. The worst of these late winter storms is that they are so often accompanied by thick mist, which makes it very difficult indeed to find the posts marking the track. There was an inn at Kautokeino, and the court was in session. The few Lapps who were being tried had all committed the same offence—stealing reindeer. They are such good-natured folk that crimes of violence are almost unknown. Things were conducted in rather a free-and-easy manner, and one accused man, after various witnesses had been called to prove that he had stolen some reindeer, was told to come back later for sentence

to be passed. He strolled off with his friends to have a drink, but was back punctually at the appointed time. The idea of running away does not seem to have entered his head. Lapps don't mind a short spell in prison, for they *are well treated and given lessons. In fact, they look on it* rather like going to a university.

But a Lapp pines under a long sentence. A Lapp who was imprisoned at Hammerfest managed to escape. It was in the depths of winter, and bitterly cold, The man had no warm clothing and no skis, yet made straight for his native hills. His body was found when the snow melted in the following spring.

From Kautokeino our traveller made south towards Karesuando. She and her new guide Johan crossed into Finland, very wild, mountainous country, with no marked track or road. A night was spent at a hut in the hills, and as the next day's journey was a long one Johan went off early to get the reindeer. Hours passed, and there was no sign of him. Mrs Chapman grew anxious. There were wolves in this country, and if they had got the reindeer it was going to be awkward. At last, about eleven o'clock, the man turned up with the deer, which had wandered miles in search of moss. As a consequence they did not get away until midday.

The glare on the snow was terrific, and the result was a bad headache. Twice they lost their way and had to turn back. The snow was soft, and the reindeer could only plod slowly. At ten o'clock the moon was bright, but there was still a red glow of sunset in the sky. By this time our traveller was very tired and far from well. They came to some Lapp huts, and Johan suggested stopping the night, but one look inside was enough. Mrs Chapman decided to go on. By twelve all colour had faded from the sky, but by one o'clock dawn showed rosy in the east. After another hour reindeer and drivers were so weary that it was decided to

stop where they were. Mrs Chapman had a fur-lined sleeping-bag, which she had never yet used. She spread it on the snow, crept in, and covered up her face. The reindeer came and lav down all round her, and within a few minutes she was fast asleep. She slept for five hours out there in the frost, and awoke much refreshed and feeling ravenously hungry.

There was a farmhouse in the distance, and there a kindly woman provided hot coffee. Mrs Chapman got out her spirit stove and boiled an egg. The people stood round and stared. They had never before seen a spirit stove, but what absolutely entranced them was the solid 'meta' fuel. Johan boasted of his English lady, and told the people that she had a camera that would take a picture of them walking about. They would not believe this, but insisted on standing up straight and stiff to have their picture taken.

By nine they were on their way to Karesuando, in Swedish Lapland. The snow was beginning to melt under the spring sun, and at this village our traveller, having successfully achieved her ambition of making a pictorial record of Lapp life and customs, sadly bade farewell to her reindeer and continued her journey by horse-sledge. The great spring trek had already begun, and Lapps with their herds were travelling up into the mountains. The days of lonely travel were over, and nothing remained but to cross from Sweden into Norway and take ship to England.

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